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LIKE A FLASH IT CAME TO MARY THAT SHE BELONGED TO THE MAN SHE HAD LOVED AND WAITED FOR SO LONG.

SIR HUMFREY'S RETURN

[A NOVELETTE.]
(Complete in this No.)

By the Author of "After Many Days,"
"A Lemon in Love," etc., etc.

PROLOGUE.

FATHER and son faced each other—anger and rage on one dark face, sorrow and regret on the other; and curiously alike the two faces were, though one was young, and fresh, and handsome, and the other old and repellant, and lined and marked

with the traces of evil and unbridled passions, to which full ruin had been given.

"And so, sir, you mean to defy me?" roared Sir Nicholas Castlemaine.

"Not to defy you," returned his son Humfrey, quietly.

"What else do you call your conduct but defiance, eh? A gross revolt against parental authority?"

"I am a trifle too old, sir, to be ordered about like a schoolboy," rejoined young Castlemaine, with some warmth.

"Too old, indeed!" shouted his father, rattling his stick on the polished boards noisily.

"Too old! What is the world coming to? What are young people nowadays thinking of! Why, boy, in my time we hardly dared to sit down in the presence of our parents, and never

presumed to think for ourselves. We obeyed the commands laid on us without a murmur, or we should have suffered a severe and justly-merited punishment."

"Times and ways have changed since then," Humfrey rejoined calmly.

"They have," groaned Sir Nicholas; "and changed for the worse. A parent seems now to have little or no authority over a child."

"Very little," agreed his son, coolly, "after the child passes the age of twenty-one; and, you know, I am twenty-five."

"I know it," snapped the elder man, "and I wish you were five. By heaven, boy," the father thundered, "I would rather anything happened than that which you contemplate. It will ruin your prospects!"

"I don't think so," rejoined Humfrey. "I am sorry my conduct displeases."

"Show your sorrow. Do as I wish."

"I regret that it is impossible for me to do what you wish," rejoined the young fellow, regretfully, yet very firmly.

"Rubbish! Ridiculous rubbish! There is no reason at all why you should not obey my commands. Be a dutiful son!"

"There are several reasons. In the first place, I do not love Lady Jane."

"Not love her! Ha! ha! That's excellent," chuckled the old man, with a horrible mirthless laugh. "Not love her! Is love a necessary part of the programme of marriage? How many men love the woman they marry! Not one in ten."

"What other men do is nothing to me."

"Then it should be. I did not marry for love," with a sardonic grin that made the ugly, lined old face look a thousand times uglier and more repulsive.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," rejoined the younger man, sternly. "It must have been an unfortunate thing for my poor mother."

"Not at all. She didn't care in the least. I wasn't half the trouble to her that an adoring husband would have been. She went her way and I went mine."

"And she died after one brief year of married life?" broke in Humfrey, bitterly.

"That was your fault, not mine," snarled Sir Nicholas. "She died when you were exactly twenty-four hours old."

"Poor soul!" murmured the son, with infinite tenderness for the mother he had never seen.

"I was told by my father to marry, and I married, that was all," said the Baronet. "I made no objections, though I was over fifty; only obeyed my father, like a dutiful son."

"I love but one woman, but I love her with unswerving devotion, and shall till the last day of my life."

"How romantic!" sneered Sir Nicholas. "Sounds like a line out of a sensational novel. Does credit, I'm sure, to your heart. But as to your head—well, I think you a fool, Humfrey! A brainless idiot!"

"You have already done me the honour to tell me that."

"And I suppose I can tell you again if I like?" snarled the Baronet, grinning up his thin lips and showing his fangs like an ill-tempered and quarrelsome cur might.

"Certainly. Only it will do no good."

"You mean—that you—will not give up Mary?" said Sir Nicholas, slowly, his cheeks turning to a sickly yellow hue as he held down his rage by a great effort.

"That is what I mean, Sir Nicholas," rejoined his son, ceremoniously.

The two pairs of eyes, so like and yet so unlike, met and held each other in a long, defiant gaze, as father and son stood silent opposite each other, the full, bright light of the June day pouring down upon each dark, troubled face.

"You are aware," said the Baronet at last, speaking quite quietly, though his face was still ashy pale, "that I can disinherit you if I choose? That I can leave Castlemaine, and all in it, and every stick and stone on the estate to any child of mine, legitimate or illegitimate?"

"I know it," replied Humfrey, calmly.

"You are my only legitimate child. But," continued the old man, with one of his sardonic grins, "I have more than one illegitimate child."

"I know it," said the young man again, experiencing a strong twinge of horror and disgust at his father's cool way of alluding to the villainies of his youthful days.

"I can leave the estates to Peter or his sister."

"Certainly you can if you think fit to do so," rejoined Humfrey, very stiffly.

"Do—n it, boy, don't make me think fit to do so," vociferated Sir Nicholas, enraged

at the other's coolness. "I want you to be my heir. You are a gentleman; your mother was thoroughbred, the others are *canaille*. They would shame and disgrace the old name."

"Possibly," said the young man, bitterly, "and they would not be the first of the race of Castlemaine who have done that."

"Ha! ha! You mean me!" jeered the Baronet, with a callous laugh. "I certainly have not polished the lustre of the name. I know they say I'm bad—bad as my namesake, Old Nick, and that the people about don't care to visit me, or take my hospitality. But what do I care for that?"

"Nothing at all, I should say," rejoined Humfrey, coldly.

"And you say rightly. They cut me and I cut them, d—n them all! A parcel of mushroom gentlefolks, whose fathers sold tallow, or cheese, or hides, or something of that kind, and coined money by successful trading. Where is one for twenty miles round who can show a pedigree like mine, or a name as old as that of Castlemaine?"

"It is not always the old name and long pedigree that makes the gentleman. Something more than that is required."

"How now, Humfrey?" ejaculated his father. "What is the meaning of such words from your lips? By Heaven! I believe that white-faced wench at the Cot has been imbuing you with some of her abominable, low, republican ideas."

"Of whom are you speaking, Sir Nicholas?" asked Humfrey, coldly, while a stern look gathered in his eyes, and his black brows knitted into an ominous frown, that made his face more like the evil one opposite him.

"Of whom am I speaking? Why, of Mary Castlemaine, of course. What else in the shape of a petticoat would have any influence with you?"

"Then be kind enough not to speak of my cousin in such terms. A wench is an epithet that might be applied to a scullery-maid, not to a lady."

"And do you call Mary a lady of the first-class order?" his father sneeringly inquired.

"Most certainly I do!" responded the young man, warmly. "She is a lady in every sense of the word, and a good, true girl besides—as amiable as she is beautiful, and—"

"There, there!" snarled Sir Nicholas, furiously, "spare me your silly, senseless rhapsodies, boy. I don't want to hear the mulings and pulings of your idiotic calf love. Reserve those interesting speeches for the ears that care to hear them. I don't. Only answer me one thing, and answer straight and truthfully," thumping on the floor again with the gold-mounted stick, in which in less excited moments he was wont to lean. "Will you or will you not marry Lady Jane Cholmondeley?"

"You have had my answer before, sir," rejoined Humfrey, with the utmost coolness.

"And you mean to marry that penniless girl, Mary Castlemaine?" continued the old man, shaking with rage.

"Yes; I hope to do so at some future time."

"Then it will be in the future. For, listen to me, Humfrey Castlemaine. From this hour I disown you. You are no son of mine to disobey and defy me as you have done, and to punish you I shall disinherit you. One of your base-born half-brothers shall have Castlemaine and every acre that lies around it. Not a stick or a stone shall be yours—not an inch on which you can put your foot. You shall be houseless and homeless as far as I can make you, and you may die in the workhouse or the gutter before I will stir one finger to help you, or give you one penny of my money. You hear?"

"Yes, I hear," said young Castlemaine, quietly, though his face had grown very pale, "and I will not ask for your help, but having a pair of strong hands will work for my living."

"You will have to do so. I cast you off;

and now go!" pointing to the door with his stick. "The same roof can no longer shelter you and I."

"It cannot, indeed," replied Humfrey, sorrowfully, as he moved towards the door. "Good-bye, father. I hope you may never regret this day's work!"

"Go!" was all the old man replied, and he stood with his stick outstretched, while his son passed out of the room. Then he sank down into an arm chair, exhausted by his rage, yet not too much so, but that he could send a volley of dreadful oaths after the young man's retreating figure.

Humfrey went slowly and sadly up to his own room, and put together a few of his personal effects, which he told his man to forward up to London; but Jeff Morton—who was his foster-brother, his mother having nursed the heir of the Castlemaines along with her own sturdy baby, when Lady Louisa, who had been gradually fading from her wedding day, under the chilling, cruel blight of her husband's dislike and indifference, died a few hours after his birth—announced his intention of going up to town with him, and of sharing his fortunes, good or bad.

"I shall not be able to pay you any wages, Morton," said his master, firmly, yet kindly. "If you choose to come and rough it with me, well and good. You can share any good luck I may meet with, as well as any bad."

"I don't want money, Mr. Humfrey," returned the young man very earnestly. "All I want is to be near you. The old folk are dead now. My brother has the farm; there's nothing to keep me here. I'd a world sooner be with you on short commons than I'd go into any other gentleman's service."

"Well then come. Jeff, I should like you to come, only I warn you there is nothing before us but a life of hard work."

"I am used to work, sir, and no matter where I am I must get employment. I can't be idle."

"I shall probably leave England."

"I should like that above all things, sir. We might make a big fortune in the gold-fields!"

"We might," said Humfrey, the ghost of a smile flitting across his pale face, "but I doubt it."

And then, seeing his foster-brother's fidelity, he said no more, only told him to be at Ling Station in time for the seven o'clock express. And then he went down the wide marble staircase of his old ancestral home, took a last look at the frowning portraits of his ancestors, whistled his dog Hugo to heel, and passed out into the glow and brilliance of the summer day.

Humfrey did not make straight for Ling Station; he had one visit to pay before he left the vicinity of Castlemaine, and that was to The Cot, where dwelt his love and cousin, Mary Castlemaine, and her mother, his uncle Dick's widow.

Richard Castlemaine was Sir Nicholas's younger brother, and though as a young man he had not been famed for his virtues, still, beside the heir-presumptive he appeared a saint, and his faults were chiefly those of weakness, not vice.

Humfrey counted the bride chosen for him by Sir Nicholas from among the titled ones of the earth as well lost if in the end he could make Mary his bride; but that was doubtful. He would never ask her to share absolute poverty with him, and he might never have anything else to offer her. He was eager to feel the clasp of her hands, and hear her sweet, consoling words; so he left the beaten track, and plunged through the knee-deep feathery fern and bracken in his anxiety to reach The Cot quickly. He had not gone far when he met a man, dressed as a gamekeeper, walking with one of the village beauties, Lucky Biggs, whose ruddy cheeks escaped in curly profusion from under her sun-bonnet, and whose eyes were as blue as summer skies.

The man touched his hat to him as he passed, and he nodded in return. Yet a sharp twinge ran through his heart as he looked at the dark, strongly-marked face so like his own. The man was his half-brother, Peter Brasdale, a son of Sir Nicholas by a woman, one Margorie Brasdale, the daughter of one of his tenant-farmers, and was his senior by some four or five years. And now he would probably inherit Castlemaine and all the broad acres that lay around, while he would be "Sir Humfrey," an empty honour for a man with nothing a year wherewith to keep up the dignity of the title. The frown deepened on his brow, the cloud gathered darker in his eyes, his step grew less springy.

He had made a terrible sacrifice on the shrine of love! Yet he hardly counted it a sacrifice when, five minutes later, he stood beside his cousin, in the garden of The Cot, and looked into her clear, serious eyes, and listened to her sweet, even tones.

Mary Castlemaine was a beautiful girl, and a fine one, too. She was five feet eight inches in height, broad-shouldered, and well-proportioned. Her neck was like a marble column, and her regal head well set on it. Her skin was of a creamy whiteness, her hair light brown, glossy and abundant, her eyes grey, fringed with dark lashes that made them look larger, and overarched by brows that were nearly black; her features were regular and finely cut, and her expression peculiarly winning.

It was no wonder that Humfrey loved her, and was ready to sacrifice anything, save honour, for her dear sake.

"What is it Humfrey?" she asked, when the first greetings were over, and he had left a lover's kiss on her smooth, fair cheek, looking at him with anxious eyes. "You are troubled about something."

"Yes, dearest," he replied, with a half sigh that she checked and strangled at its birth, lest when she learnt his trouble she should think he regretted what he had done for love of her. "I am a little."

"What is it that worries you? Tell me," and she laid a slim white hand coaxingly on his coat-sleeve.

"Yes, Mary, I mean to tell you everything. I have come here for that purpose before I go away."

"Go away, Humfrey!" she echoed, some of the wild-rose bloom fading from her face, leaving it of a uniform creamy pallor from brow to chin. "Are you going away?"

"I must, dearest. Since I have no home, I must work to enable me to keep one for myself."

"Oh, Humfrey! What has happened?" she queried, a look of anguish stealing into the large, eloquent eyes.

"I will tell you," said the young man, drawing her hand through his arm, and leading her to the orchard, where the old pear, apple, and plum trees were burdened with their yet miniature fruit, and formed a screen which shut them off from inquisitive eyes.

"Now, Humfrey," she asked, breathlessly, clutching his arm nervously. "Tell me the worst at once."

"The worst is this, Mary, that I have quarrelled with my father, that he has turned me out of Castlemaine, forbids me ever to return, and intends to disinherit me in favour of that incorrigible poacher, Peter Brasdale, as you know he can."

"Oh, Humfrey, Humfrey! How terrible," she wailed.

"Not at all, dear," he rejoined, soothingly, passing his arm round her waist, and pressing her close up against him. "I have foreseen this for the last six years. It was all very well while I blindly followed his commands. The moment I rebelled, and chose to assert myself, I knew my father would quarrel with me."

"And—and—is it about me you have disagreed?" she faltered.

"It was about Lady Jane Cholmondeley," he replied, a little evasive, "not wishing to pain

her, or give her cause to regret her affection for him. "Sir Nicholas wished me to marry her within three months, and bring her to Castlemaine, and I declined to do so, as I do not love the lady. My affections are already engaged," and he pressed his companion's arm tenderly.

"Dear Humfrey," she murmured, looking at him adoringly.

"I would not do Lady Jane the injustice of marrying her, my heart being yours; and my father giving me no alternative but to leave his house I have left it, and I mean to go to London first to see what I can do."

"And then?" she inquired, her eyes fixed mournfully on the dark face, that was so unutterably dear to her.

"And then, love? Why, I hardly know yet. But I think, Mary, that there is not much chance of a penniless fellow getting on in England just now. I suppose I must try the Colonies. I may be lucky, and make a fortune quickly in Africa."

"It is a long way off," she sighed.

"Yes, dearest. Still, there are good openings there for any one willing to work, and Heaven knows I am willing enough to do anything to make an income large enough to ask you to share it with me."

"Dear Humfrey," she said again, her eyes saying more than her lips.

"I don't mean to bind you down to me," he went on, laying his hand fondly over hers.

"I feel that it would not be fair to do so under existing circumstances. It may be years and years before I can claim you, and I would rather leave you free, so that if you do change and grow to care for any other man—"

"Oh, Humfrey!" she interrupted, reproachfully. "As though I ever could change, could care for anyone but you."

"My dearest, we never know how we may change as the years go on. It may be ten before I return to you."

"I shall be true to you, even if it be twenty."

"I believe you will be, dearest love. Only it seems to me that I should be dishonourable did I bind you by an engagement. In a love affair everything should be voluntary. There should be no shackling, no tying down. Each should be as free as the winged creatures of the air. I trust you thoroughly, therefore I leave you free, and if you still care for me when I return, as I hope to do, a rich man, you know what happiness you will confer on me if you become my wife."

"I shall never alter, dear!" she answered, simply. "I have never cared for anyone but you, and I never shall. You are my first and you will be my last love. Even if we do not meet again until we are old, wrinkled, grey, worldworn and weary, it will make no difference to me. I shall feel the same towards you as I do now."

"My dearest Mary," he said, stooping to press his lips to her cheek. "I know and feel that what you say is true, that I shall find you waiting when I return. And, dearest, you must not think me untrue or unkind if I do not write to you, if you do not receive letters from me. I mean to make a hard fight for victory, and I expect a good deal of roughing it. In the 'diggings' I expect there will not be many of the comforts and elegancies of civilisation. I shall find it difficult to get letters transmitted, and shall often lack the means of writing one. You will understand, and not misinterpret my silence."

"I shall understand, Humfrey. Nothing shall make me believe you untrue save the testimony of your own lips, your own conduct."

"They shall never condemn me, sweetheart," he cried, joyfully. "Like you, I shall be steadfast and true unto death."

"And now tell me some of your plans," she said, gently, as they paced under the heavily-laden apple-boughs.

"They are hardly formed yet, Mary. I must go to town and see my lawyer and my bankers before I can decide much."

He did not like to wound her faithful, tender heart by telling her that all he had in the world to start with was sixty pounds, all that lay between him and that wolf of the sharp teeth—starvation, all that he had to take him and his foster-brother to that far distant land, where he hoped to find fortune and good luck awaiting him with outstretched hands.

"And shall I see you again before—before—you leave—England?" the clear, even tones faltering a little.

"I think not, darling. Travelling is expensive work. My present position forces me to be economical, and the sooner I set sail and reach the El Dorado for which I am bound the sooner I shall get back to you, the sooner we can wed."

"It is very sudden," she murmured, turning pale, and hanging a little on his arm. "It—it—unnerves me to think we must part so soon, for so long."

"Cheer up, Mary. Think of the bright future, when we shall be united once more, never to part again. And, darling, I have a legacy to leave you. Will you accept it?"

"Dear, anything from you," she responded, tenderly.

"It is Hugo," whistling up the great brindled hound who, only just emerged from puppyhood, still shambled about in an ungainly, loose-jointed, ridiculous fashion. "Will you keep him for me while I am away, or is it too much to ask you to look after such a huge fellow?"

"I will take care of him for you with the greatest pleasure," she answered, readily. "Indeed, we have been talking of getting a dog. Mother feels lonely since Pippo died. Come, Hugo!" stretching out her white hand, "will you be my dog while your dear master is away?" and in response the great brute leapt up and fawned on her, licking her hand and whining.

"You will be in good hands, Hugo; and mind you take care of your mistress, and shield her from all danger," an order the dog seemed to understand, for he bestowed on young Castlemaine a look of almost human intelligence.

"Good-bye, dearest!" said Humfrey an hour later, as he stood by the King levels, where the sun shone redly in the pools of water, taking a last farewell of his love. "Don't forget me. Even though you hear nothing of me for years and years trust in me, and keep a corner in your heart for Humfrey," and kissing her again and again with passionate intensity he unclasped her clinging hands and put her from him, striding away rapidly towards Ling, not trusting himself once to look back at that white-clad figure bathed in the golden glory of the setting summer sun, that laid a glamour over earth and sky, and made all things gay and cheerful save his heart, and that of the woman he left behind.

CHAPTER I.

Up at Castlemaine confusion reigned. Frightened white-faced domestics crept about on tiptoe, and spoke with bated breath. Doctors' carriages rolled up the wide, gravelled drive at all hours of the day, for the overbearing despot, the irreclaimable rake, Sir Nicholas Castlemaine, was dying, and dying horribly in torture such as few cared to witness, and that was enough to daunt the bravest heart.

However, it did not daunt his sister-in-law, Mrs. Castlemaine, nor her daughter. They were both in the sick room doing what they could to alleviate his terrible sufferings, notwithstanding that, ten years before, when he drove his only son away by his abominable conduct, he had grossly insulted them, and accused them of inciting his son to rebellion in order to gain their own ends.

Mary, who was as beautiful as of yore, only quieter and sadder, and who had ceased almost to hope, so long had her only lover—or to speak more correctly, for her lovers were many, her only beloved—been away, and, what was more, silent! The letters that had at first come to cheer her soon ceased, and left a sad blank in her life that it seemed nothing could fill.

Her mother called her about her constancy, and urged her to accept one of the many good offers she received.

But Mary would shake her fair head and sigh, and say no, she did not want to marry. She would rather remain single, and keep her liberty and independence.

"And all for a man who will never come back!" Mrs. Castlemaine would groan.

"He will come back, mother!" Mary would reply, confidently.

"And if he should be will of course be married, and you will have thrown away your good chances for nothing. A will-o'-the-wisp, a chimeral!"

"I must take my chance of that, and I don't think Humfrey will come back married. If he comes back at all he will come as he went, a free man."

"What faith you have in him!" grumbled the widow. "He ought to be good to merit such trust!"

"He is!" returned the girl, bravely.

"Not many women would place implicit faith in a man to whom they were not even engaged."

"Most women, probably, do not know the temperament and nature of the man they love. I know Humfrey, therefore I trust him. I know he is too upright and honourable to be capable of a low or mean action—one unworthy of a gentleman."

"Well, well, I hope it may all come right in the end."

"If it does not, mother, that is right according to your way of thinking. I shall be content—content to know that he loved me once, better than anything else in the whole world."

"Oh, it is all very well for poets to sing—

'It is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all;'

but that kind of exalted sentiment is ruinous to a girl's settlement in life. You are more than good-looking Mary, and I did hope to see you mistress of an elegant establishment, married to a good man who could appreciate you, and make you happy."

"Your hope may be realised yet, mother," replied the daughter, with an assumption of light-hearted gaiety, which, perhaps, she did not really feel.

"I am afraid not."

"Who knows what the future holds for me?"

"Nobody, of course. We can't lift the veil of futurity. Still, I don't see that there can be a brilliant future before you when you persist in keeping true to a man who, even if he does return to claim you, will have nothing to offer you but—"

"But his heart and affection, which I should prize more than anything else in the whole world," she interrupted, quickly.

"Perhaps. Still you can't live upon affection," remarked the widow, grimly. "Not all the love in the world will pay the butcher and baker's bills, and you can't exist without eating. If Humfrey does come back you must remember that he will be penniless, that his father said he would disinherit him."

"I remember that, and also that he was eager and willing to work—to make money, to keep a home for me."

"And nearly ten years have passed since he went away, and as he has not come back we may presume his fortune has not been made."

"Yes," sighed Mary, a sorrowful look clouding her sweet eyes, as she thought of the gallant lover who had left her ten weary years before—left her with his kiss on her brow, her young heart beating high with hope and trust.

The trust remained, but hope was almost gone. She did not even know if he yet lived, or whether he had gone to that land of shadows whither all our feet are fleetly tending.

As Mary sat by the dying baronet's bedside, sad, silent, engaged in an unsatisfactory retrospect, she was startled out of her reverie by a feeble, though still harsh voice breaking the oppressive silence suddenly.

"Mary!"

It was the Baronet who spoke, and she rose and leant over him at once.

"Take my keys—from under the pillow. Open the drawer of the writing-table, and give me the parchment you see lying in the front."

Quickly she obeyed his commands, and as she took the parchment from the drawer she could not avoid seeing written thereon in large, legible letters the words, "Last Will and Testament of Sir Nicholas Castlemaine, Bart."

"Bring me a light," said the old man, haltingly. "I want to burn this."

Mary lit a candle, and, propping him up with pillows, helped his feeble movements as he held the parchment in the flame, and watched it curl and blacken slowly into tinder, until at last nothing remained save a charred mass on the shawl she had spread over the counterpane.

"There!" he exclaimed, sinking back on his pillows, "Humfrey will inherit the old place now, not Peter—not Peter. A thoroughbred, not a mongrel. D'ye hear, Mary?"

"Yes, uncle, I hear," she replied, quietly, though a mild thrill of joy ran through her faithful heart to think that the man she loved would inherit his old home, the place that was his by right.

"No one knew I made that will," he went on slowly, with a faint chuckle, the mere ghostly echo of his former lusty one. "No one—save Montague—Humfrey will be master now here, and—you," fixing his wicked, glazing eyes on her pale face, "you—mistress, and I—don't mind," and then he turned his face to the wall, and lay still and silent, and she thought he slept.

But when the day waned, and, alarmed by his stillness, she summoned her mother and the doctor, they found he was dead, and that his son, who was no one knew where, was the Baronet, Sir Humfrey Castlemaine.

CHAPTER II.

"I wonder in what out-of-the-way corner of the globe Humfrey has hidden himself!" remarked Mrs. Castlemaine, discontentedly, one morning about six weeks after her brother-in-law's death, as she sat in the bright little kitchen of The Cot, shelling peas, while their "general" fed the chickens, and sought for new-laid eggs.

"It is impossible to say," said Mary, quietly, though a slight flush rose to her smooth cheek, and she bent her graceful head a little lower over the paste-board—for this scion of a great house was not above making pies and puddings; indeed, she had to, and many other derogatory things, for their small income obliged them to economise very strictly.

"It must be a very remote spot."

"Why mother!"

"Because Montague has put advertisements in nearly every paper published, and has detectives searching for him in Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and other great cities. It seems strange that he should not see or hear of the good fortune that awaits him."

"He may be in the backwoods of America, or the bush of Australia," remarked the woman who loved him speculatively.

"Yes. In some hole of that sort. It was a great pity, Mary, that you and Humfrey made that ridiculous arrangement of not writing to each other."

"We thought it better not to write, to leave each other free from any tie or shackle."

"Nonsensical rubbish," said the widow sharply. "If you had insisted upon his cor-

responding with you as you ought to have done, you would know now where he is, and be able to inform him of the fact of his father's death and his being the heir to Castlemaine," and the elder lady's eyes looked longingly across the park to where, beyond the thick-leaved tree-tops, the turrets of the stately old mansion reared themselves proudly.

"I never insisted upon anything with Humfrey, mother," said her daughter, gently. "I liked him always to do as he pleased."

"You had a right to insist."

"No, mother. There you are wrong. I had no right. No engagement existed between us. Humfrey was quite free, as he had always been, when he left Castlemaine."

"All the more foolish of you to let a man make love to you who didn't even ask you to marry him."

"Wrong again, mother. Humfrey did ask me to marry him, and had his father consented to our engagement we should have married long ago. But as Sir Nicholas absolutely forbade his union with me, and threatened to disinherit him if he married any one save Lady Jane Cholmondeley, I, of course, would not let him make the sacrifice, and I refused to become his wife, though my heart pleaded hard against my better judgment."

"You need not have robbed your heart of its birthright, my dear," remarked the elder woman, more kindly. "You see, after all, it did not do much good. Humfrey, in a different way, was quite as obstinate as his father, and wouldn't marry Lady Jane, and wouldn't give you up."

"Yes, mother. I saw it afterwards," with a sigh. "Only when I refused to marry him, or let him bind himself to me in any way, I thought it was best for him, and that Sir Nicholas would relent and leave him the property."

"It seems you were right to a certain extent. Eh?"

"Yes. If Humfrey lives he will have Castlemaine."

"If he lives," echoed the widow, with a return of asperity. "Of course he lives. What nonsense have you in your head now? Why give up being sentimental and romantic now, Mary; and when your cousin returns accept him in a sensible sort of way, and make no fuss or bother about matters."

"You are forgetting one thing, mother."

"What is that?"

"Humfrey may not ask me to marry him again."

"Not ask you! I never heard of such a thing. You think he won't ask you! The man you have so much faith and trust in!"

"I had faith and trust in the Humfrey who went away ten years ago. But it is a long time, and men change—change far more than women, who remain in one place, and whose ideas do not alter. Moreover, Sir Humfrey Castlemaine will be slightly different from Mr. Castlemaine, who was quite dependent on his father's capricious will. He will have place and position as master of Castlemaine and—"

"And," interrupted her mother, "will be a mark for all women to aim at matrimonially."

"Yes," with another deep sigh.

"Well, well, Mary," touched by the look of melancholy on her daughter's fair face, "you mustn't fret. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. I shall believe Humfrey is true to you until he proves himself false. You're not lost your looks, my dear. Far from it. I think you are handsomer now than you were ten years ago."

"A mother's verdict," smiled Mary, pleased in spite of herself, and looking like a girl with her fair skin and the array of dimples the smile called up.

"We shall see, we shall see," rejoined the widow, oracularly nodding her head, as she went out to the garden to superintend the "General" in her hunt for concealed eggs.

About a week later, as Mary was walking through the village on her way to old Mrs.

Biggs's cottage, which lay on the farther side from The Cot, she met Mr. Montague bustling along with a very important air and a bright flush on his withered apple-like face.

"Ah, Miss Mary, glad to meet you," he said, stopping and shaking her hand with unnecessary vigour. "Just going up to Castlemaine."

"Are you?" was all she said, wondering a little at his unwontedly perky aspect and demeanour.

"Yes, yes. You don't ask why?" fixing his keen grey eyes on her face in a searching glance.

"No. It is nothing uncommon for you to go there since my uncle's death, is it?"

"Why, no. But I go on an uncommon errand now."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Miss Mary, yes. We have netted our bird, and I go to tell the servants and tenants that their new master is found."

For the life of her Mary Castlemaine could not prevent the hot blood from rushing to her face, dyeing her cheeks scarlet for a minute, only to recede and leave them deathly pale the next.

He was alive! The man whose memory she had faithfully loved for ten long years. She grasped that delightful fact in the midst of all her confusion, though nothing else was quite clear to her, not even the lawyer's following words. When she did recover herself sufficiently to listen he was saying,

"Very soon, of course, only I employed the best men, and they've found him."

"Where?" asked Mary at last, when she could sufficiently command her voice.

"In South Africa. Like a good many other brave English fellows, he has been doing good work for his country."

"He enlisted, I suppose!" remarked Mary, who had outwardly, at least, recovered her usual calm of demeanour.

"Yes. Sir Humfrey Castlemaine has been fighting for King and country as one of the rank and file of his Majesty's army."

"What hardships he must have endured before he did that!" murmured his cousin, pitifully.

"No doubt, no doubt," agreed the lawyer, rubbing his thin hands together. "And it was like him not to let the old name get smirched, even through him, for he enlisted as Peter Dale."

"Has he anything to prove that he is Humfrey Castlemaine?" asked Mary, suddenly.

"He has sent me a pocket-book, old and time-worn, but which I recognise as your cousin's, and he is to bring home papers with him that would prove his identity if this didn't," drawing a daguerreotype, somewhat faded, from his pocket. "You recognise the Castlemaine features, Miss Mary, doubtless?"

"Yes, yes," she acknowledged, after a moment's scrutiny of the portrait. "That is Humfrey."

"Unmistakably that is Sir Humfrey," echoed the man of law. "The face is too remarkable a one to be mistaken," and the old man turned away and began to use his handkerchief vigorously, for there were few of the family secrets he did not know, and he was well aware the cousins had been lovers, and only parted at the late Baronet's stern mandate.

"When will he return?" asked Mary at last, reluctantly wrenching her eyes away from the pictured face and handing it back to Mr. Montague.

In about three weeks' time. There are certain formalities to be gone through with the military authorities; but you know there is little money can't manage, and Sir Humfrey has plenty of that."

"Yes, plenty," said Mary, vaguely, feeling that this money of which the lawyer spoke with suchunction would be a sad barrier between her and her lover. He was much nearer to her when they were both poor.

"He will be warmly welcomed by all, and, unless I mistake him, matters will be conducted differently at the great house from the way in which they were during the late Baronet's time."

"Yes," said Mary again, her thoughts miles away on the wild veldt and hills of South Africa, where so many gallant fellows had met a dreadful death.

"You will tell your mother, Miss Mary?" said the lawyer, briskly, as he prepared to go on his way.

"Yes, I will tell her," said Miss Castlemaine, mechanically, as she shook hands with Montague and went on towards Mrs. Biggs's cottage.

She was bewildered, surprised, happy; yet with her happiness mingled a vague fear, of what she hardly knew, only it seemed to her that this Humfrey who was coming back would not be the same Humfrey who had gone away.

"Have you heard the news, Mrs. Biggs?" she asked later on, as she sat by the old woman's bedside.

"No, miss. What is it?" inquired the dame, while her granddaughter Luck looked up with inquiry in her big blue eyes.

"The Baronet, Sir Humfrey, has been found!"

"Lor' bless ye! ye don't say so?"

"Yes; and he will come to Castlemaine in a week from now to take possession of the estates."

"Ah, now! I's really glad, Miss Mary, that I are! Ye'll have ye're lad again; and ye'll be better off nor my Lucky thar, fur her Peter's gone six year come next Michaelmas, and niver ar wurd has he sent her since he went away, tho' he did say as how he was agoin' for to make a fortin, and come back to marry her."

"You may hear of him yet," said Mary, her eyes travelling to Lucky's pretty face, which was all aflame with blushes. "Remember, Sir Humfrey has been away ten years."

"Yes, yes, miss. I mind me it's a mortal long time since he quarrelled with Sir Nicholas and went. It will be a bright day for all o' us when he comes to take his own. He was iver kind to the likes o' us, an' onny beneath him. I mind me how he wud come and sit in that cheer yere sittin' in, miss, an' talk away an' larf 'till it warmed the codies o' one's heart to hear him!"

"Yes, he was of a merry disposition," said Miss Castlemaine, as she rose to take her leave.

"I hope he will be as kind to you all now."

"Mother," she said at once on entering The Cot, where Mrs. Castlemaine was presiding at the tea-table in solitary state, "Humfrey has been found, and is coming to Castlemaine next week."

"Good Heavens, Mary! do you mean it?"

"Yes, mother. I met Mr. Montague in the village, and he told me they found him in Africa, and he has indisputable proofs of his identity; and he comes to take his own next week."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the widow, fervently. "Then you will be Lady Castlemaine at last!"

"Mother, don't count on that, I beseech you!" said her daughter, earnestly. "The Humfrey who comes to Castlemaine next week will probably be quite different from the Humfrey who went away ten years ago."

"I don't believe it! I won't believe it until he proves that he is different! And you, Mary, are handsome enough to win a duke if you wished to!"

CHAPTER III.

There were triumphal arches across the roads leading to Castlemaine House. The whole village was *en fête*. Garlands of roses and other gorgeous summer blooms were strung from window to window. Some of the better-off tenants had hung scarlet cloth from their windows, and others had unfurled flags on their rooftops, and bonfires blazed on the adjoining hills; while the whole of the Castlemaine tenants in a body marched down to Ling Station to welcome the new Baronet, from whose advent they hoped so much—such a re-

versal of the old, bad, tyrannical régime under which they had bent silently, if sullenly, and had suffered so much.

When the train bearing Sir Humfrey drew up at the station they were met in a dense body on the platform, for even the station-master shared the general enthusiasm, and allowed the men to stand there to welcome their new landlord.

The door of a first-class compartment was quickly opened, and Mr. Montague sprang out swiftly and with surprising agility. He was followed more slowly and in a more dignified fashion by a tall, dark man, the lower part of whose bronzed face was clothed with a flowing brown beard that lay upon his breast in silky waves.

For a moment the tenants hesitated. This was hardly the sort of person they expected to see.

The smooth-faced youth who had gone away ten years before boasted no minute appendage beyond a slight moustache. Was this Sir Humfrey?

Mr. Montague, seeing the hesitation that prevailed in the seeried ranks of the chaw-bacons, stepped forward nimbly, and said,—

"Sir Humfrey Castlemaine, my friends!" indicating the tall, dark man by a wave of his hand.

"Three cheers for Sir Humfrey!" shouted Tom Renfrew, the chief of the tenant farmers, and the others responded right willingly to the invitation, and cheered right lustily, as only Englishmen can, bellowing like bulls in their endeavour to show their loyalty and respect to a Castlemaine.

The Baronet's lean cheeks turned somewhat pale under all their healthy gambol, and for a minute he seemed to waver, and looked almost as though he meant to bent a retreat instead of coming forward to greet the farmers and villagers. Then he drew his tall form erect, and stepped forward, saying,—

"Thank you, friends, a thousand times!" while he held out his hand to Renfrew, who gripped it in a friendly clasp, a proceeding which all the others proceeded to imitate.

"Now, Sir Humfrey," said the lawyer, briskly, when the pump-handling was over, "the carriage is waiting to take you up."

And sure enough there was a handsome barouche, with a pair of iron-grey high-stepping horses in it, and a smart-looking coachman and footman on the box, waiting outside the station.

"By Jove! A handsome turn-out!" muttered the Baronet, eyeing his carriage approvingly. "I expected nothing better than a fly. This is Montague's doing. One for him I must store up."

And then he went over and got into the barouche hastily, stumbling awkwardly as he did so and seating himself at the left side, a proceeding which astonished the old lawyer, and a mistake which he set right in a few words, by inducing Sir Humfrey to take his place at the right side. And then some of the more enthusiastic young villagers took out the iron-grey and drew the carriage along themselves, cheering and shouting lustily, and amongst the loudest and noisiest was Lucky Biggs's great red-headed brother, at whom Sir Humfrey stared furtively, biting his lips the while, and frowning a little now and again, when he wasn't smiling and howling at the vociferating crowd.

It was a sort of triumphal procession all the way, and would no doubt have been gratifying to most men, only, curiously enough, Humfrey Castlemaine did not look as though he was gratified. There was a sullen ficker in his eyes, and a frown drew his thick black brows together.

"Idiot, asses!" he muttered once, with unconcealed contempt. "Why do they make such fools of themselves?"

Montague looked round quickly, an expression of unqualified amazement on his face. It was utterly unlike a Castlemaine to be annoyed at a loudly-expressed and palpable devotion. As a rule, the members of the proud race liked

homage and respect shown them—were ready for any amount of it—and Sir Nicholas had obliged his tenants and dependents to show it on all occasions.

Sir Humfrey caught the look, and a flush mounted to his temples, while his gloved right hand stroked his beard with a curious, nervous gesture that the lawyer noticed was now habitual with him when any way disturbed.

"You see, Montague," said the Baronet, half apologetically, "I've become right down unused to this kind of thing. Haven't had any of it for ten years, you know."

"Of course, of course," agreed the man of law at once. "Only if I may make a suggestion, Sir Humfrey?" and he paused, a look of inquiry in his bright bird-like eyes.

"Certainly; make any suggestions you like. I shall be obliged for them. You know the temper and humour of these people. I don't," said his companion, very graciously.

"Then, Sir Humfrey, I would not show any annoyance at their enthusiasm. Rather would I seem pleased with it. It is always better to make friends than enemies."

"Of course, of course," said the newly-returned wanderer with eager assent.

"And I think if you were to make a speech to them that they would like it."

"Make a speech!" echoed the Baronet, looking decidedly perturbed and put out.

"Yes; it is usual, and now would be a good time," for they had arrived in the middle of Castlemaine Village, by the green; and, stopping the men drawing the carriage by a few words, Montague did not give Humfrey time to object.

The Baronet cast a swift glance around at the sea of faces, all turned towards him, and his cheeks whitened curiously as his eyes fell on Lucky Biggs's pretty, blooming, smiling face, perhaps because he remembered the last time he saw her was when she was walking with Peter Broaddale, and he was hurrying to say good-bye to the woman he loved, and doubtless the recollection was painful and unpleasant. So, after one swift glance, he drew his hat further over his eyes, and, rising to his feet, began his speech with the words, "My friends, I rise to thank you for the kind and warm welcome you are good enough to give me."

But after that nobody quite knew what he said. His words were confused, and came haltingly, and his voice was pitched in such a low key that only those just near the carriage could even catch a word here and there, and he brought it to an abrupt close by thanking them once more.

"There is The Cot," remarked Montague, with mild meaning, as they caught a glimpse of the pretty little place through a vista of trees and green leaves.

"The Cot!" echoed Humfrey, vaguely, looking at Montague with eyes that looked blank, and as though they did not understand.

"Yes. Where your aunt lives."

"Where my aunt lives?" he echoed again, his eyes glancing away furtively to a farmhouse perched on a neighbouring hill.

"Yes, Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Oh, of course! I have been away so long I seem to have forgotten everyone," said the Baronet, hurriedly again, fondling his beard.

"Ah, yes!" rejoined the lawyer, drily, thinking of Mary Castlemaine, and her long-deferred hope.

"How is my—my cousin, Miss Mary?" continued the young man, hesitatingly.

"Very well, and handsomer than ever!"

"She has not married, I believe?"

"No. She has not married," rejoined the lawyer, again drily.

"And you say she is handsomer than she was?"

"I think so. But you will be able to judge for yourself soon."

"Why? Will they be at Castlemaine to-day?"

"No," said the lawyer, wondering at the young man's habit of going to such a thing.

"But I presume you will go to see them very soon."

"Will they expect me to?" inquired the Baronet, that curious vague look of inquiry in his eyes.

"That I really can't say, Sir Humfrey," rejoined his companion, coldly and stiffly.

"What I mean is," said the Baronet, quickly, noticing Montague's manner, "that there was, I believe, a quarrel between my father and—and—the folk at The Cot, and I didn't know whether I should be welcome or not."

"That's a cool way of putting it," thought the old man, "considering he was the cause of it all!" Aloud he said, "There was a quarrel, of course. Still, your aunt is a kind-hearted lady; and as to Miss Mary, she was always your friend, and I don't think she is one likely to change towards those she championed."

"He knows of that old love affair," said Humfrey to himself, and the sombre look in his eyes deepened, and he grew more morose and taciturn.

"His ten years' exile has not improved him," reflected Mr. Montague, as he sat opposite him at the dinner-table, and watched him eat any of the plain dishes which were offered him with a voracity of greediness. "Must have roughed it terribly," continuing his train of thoughts. "It seems to have rubbed off all the old polish and high breeding, and have left ungentelemanly habits behind. Wonder what he did with himself before he enlisted? He's very reticent about it. I must try and find out."

"Don't bother about the past, Montague," said the Baronet, brusquely, rising from the table. "That's over and done with. Come into the library and talk about the future. I want you to advise me on several points, to tell me the right thing to do, and the right people to know. It is such an age since I went away that I feel like a stranger, so I want you to coach me up."

"I am at your disposal, Sir Humfrey," rejoined the lawyer, suffering himself to be seized by the arm and led off to the library. Still he spoke coldly, and he felt disgusted with the man who owned Castlemaine, and who sat in the most inelegant of attitudes, lounging back in an arm chair, his feet on the mantelpiece, and a huge jug of beer at his elbow, from which he took copious draughts now and then in a pewter pot, which he had ordered up from the kitchen; an order which made the butler stare, and the lawyer wonder more than ever!

CHAPTER IV.

The next morning Sir Humfrey awoke suddenly from a sound sleep, and rubbed his eyes as he looked around. At first he did not realise where he was, and then a strange sense of familiarity seized him.

"Beastly vault-like place!" he muttered, crossly. "Too big to be comfortable, and ghastly old-fashioned. I'm hanged if I don't alter it all. I'll have some fellows down from London with light, new furniture for the rooms I intend to use. Suppose I must leave the others as they are, for the sake of appearances. It won't do to alter too many things. The Castlemaines are conservative. You must be cautious, Humfrey, old fellow—" shaking his fist at his reflection in a big mirror, as he stepped out of bed—"cautious and careful, or you'll be cut by the big-wigs of the county as your precious father was, and that won't do, you know, sonny. You must keep in with the lords and ladies, though you let the small fry go hang," and soliloquising, in not the most elegant fashion in the world, he proceeded to take his bath and dress himself.

Having finished his toilet, the Baronet, leaning his elbows on the dressing-table, stared intently at his dark face in the glass.

"I wonder whether she remembers me well," he said, anxiously, regarding his features

intently. "Of course, this makes a difference," touching the silky waves of his beard; "and as to eyes, and hair, and brows, one Castlemaine is as like another as two peas in a pod."

"If she cares for you, Humfrey, still," talking to his reflection, "as she did when she wrote you that charming little love-letter nine years ago, you'll be all safe, and the beautiful Mary quite ready to be transformed from Miss into Lady Castlemaine. At any rate, you have to face her, my boy; so the sooner it's got over the better, more especially as every one believes you to be a most devoted lover," and an ugly sneer disfigured the dark face, making it wonderfully like his father's saturnine countenance.

Sir Humfrey did not make a very good breakfast. He ate like a man who felt he must make haste, that the time for his meal was limited, and that he was liable to be called on at any minute to rise from the table and leave his breakfast unfinished.

At this railroad speed it did not take long to get through breakfast, and as soon as he had done he got up and went out to the hall for his hat. There he was confronted by the house-keeper, Mrs. Tennant.

"Have you any orders for me, sir?" she asked, respectfully, dropping a curtsy.

"No, not any," he rejoined, hurriedly, turning his back on her, and searching for his hat.

"What shall I have prepared for your luncheon, sir?" in no way disconcerted by his scant politeness.

"Nothing," he replied, curtly. "I shan't be in to luncheon. I—I am going to see Mrs. Castlemaine, and shall remain there."

As Sir Humfrey walked across the park, where the dew yet lay on the grass, sparkling like myriad fairy diamonds, his thoughts were divided between his cousin and the value of the timber he owned. He did not hurry; his pace was not that of an eager and ardent lover.

No, on the contrary, he strolled slowly along, and the nearer he got to The Cot the slower his pace became, and the paler his face, while his hand caressed his beard affectionately.

"It's no use shirking it," he said, at last, angrily, pulling himself together, as it were, as he passed through the park gates, and stood on the road, looking at his aunt's cottage, wreathed in climbing roses, that crept up to the thatched roof, and peeped at the old chimneys, where the swallows built, curiously. "It has to be done, and if she cuts up rough I can't help it. I'll do my best. So here goes." And, crossing the road, he swung back the little gate, and strode up the garden path, which ran between trim flower-beds, where pale lilies reared their stately heads, besides hollyhocks, sweet pea, marigolds, mignonette, and other humble blooms.

The cottage door stood open, and the hall looked temptingly cool and clean, in contrast with the outside glare and heat.

He paused for a moment on the step, and lifted his hand half-way to the knocker, then he let it fall back to his side.

"No, that won't do," he muttered. "I must show a bold front," and he strode into the miniature hall, and turned the handle of a door on the right.

He found himself in a small room prettily furnished, with a hundred dainty little nick-nacks, that showed women constantly used it, and standing by the table with her back to him was a woman, in a pale blue cambric gown, the graceful, rounded lines of whose figure were admirably displayed by it.

She was arranging flowers in some quaint little bowls, and did not look round, only stuck a spray of banksia roses amid a mass of feathery fern, exclaiming—

"There, mother, how do you think that will do?"

"Charmingly," said the Baronet, advancing. "But, then, Mary, everything you do is charming!"

With an exclamation that was half fear, Miss Castlemaine turned round, and stood staring at her cousin with dilated eyes, while he stopped short as he encountered her gaze, and also stood staring, while his lean cheek grew white and suffused by turns.

She recognised him, of course, at a glance. What was a decade without having seen him to her, who had shrined his image in her heart of hearts? She would have known his eyes, and those level black brows anywhere, amid a thousand. The Castlemaine face was too marked a one not to be remembered.

"Humfrey," she said, quietly, the next moment, mastering the feelings that threatened to overwhelm her. "So you have come to see us?"

"Yes, Mary," he replied, with a quick-drawn breath, as though of relief, as he put out his hand and took hers between both his. "I have come at last. Are you weary of waiting?" His eyes looked very tender as he asked the question and bent towards her, and he wondered why she shrank away from him, to avoid the caress she saw threatening.

"The years have seemed long," she answered, evasively, studying the face that seemed so like and yet so unlike what it was ten years before.

"I dared not even write," he said, sorrowfully.

"Why not?" she asked, composedly, withdrawing her hand from his clasp, and busying herself once more with the flowers.

"Luck was against me. Nothing seemed to prosper with me. Fellows in a claim would be getting on well until I joined them, then we would part our nothing. The diamonds I found were worthless. The farms I worked on were never successful. I could not put by any money. I could only just make enough to live on, and I would not come back to you a beggar!"

"Poor Humfrey!" she said, softly, with an exquisite intonation of pity, "poor Humfrey! Your life must have been a hard one."

"It was, Mary," he burst out. "Infernally, d—d hard! I beg your pardon," he added, humbly, seeing her astonished look. "I've been associating with a rough set lately. Will you forgive me?"

"Of course," she answered, rather shortly, feeling very much annoyed at his swearing before her.

"You know for over two years I've been a private soldier in the 30th Foot," he went on, deprecatingly, "and a fellow's manners soon deteriorate."

"Yes, naturally," she agreed, wondering if it was the hardships he had undergone that had changed his voice from its old, full, rich, melodious tones to its present harsher and more sonorous ones.

"I have gone through a great deal," he went on, with considerable self-pity. "It has been like an ugly nightmare, and I want to ask you, Mary—coming closer, and imprisoning her hand again confidentially—"not to talk about it. The topic is a very painful one to me. I would gladly forget and blot out, if I could, the last ten years. Will you help me to do this?"

"Yes, Humfrey," she said, slowly. "I will not touch on the topic of your absence since you do not like it mentioned, though I must admit I should much like to have heard what your life had been, and all that you have done."

"It's been pretty well a blank, save for hard work and struggles against starvation. There's nothing much to tell, Mary—nothing at all fit for your ears to hear. So we will draw a veil over the past and begin again. Shall we?"

His dark eyes fixed themselves very earnestly on her fair face, and seemed to await her answer with great anxiety.

"We will as far as we can," she responded, quietly. "Only a second beginning is never the same as a first. And now come and see mother," she added, quickly, as though to stop the words that trembled on the Baronet's lips.

"She is in the kitchen garden, and I am sure you know how glad she will be to see you."

"Yes, gladder than you are," he retorted, with a tinge of bitterness in his sonorous tones, as he followed her down the passage leading to the garden.

Just outside the door, basking in the sunshine, lay a huge brindled hound, whose grey-muzzled and blue eyes showed he was well-stricken in years. He got up as they emerged from the doorway, and stood with bristling mane, growling at the stranger.

"That seems a savage brute?" remarked Sir Humfrey, eyeing him carefully.

"He is wonderfully good-tempered as a rule, only savage with tramps and low people. We have found him such a comfort and protection," she added, gratefully.

"Where did you get him?" he asked, curiously. "He looks old."

"Where did we get him!" echoed Mary, lifting her grey eyes, full of astonishment, to the Baronet's face. "Why, surely, Humfrey, you remember Hugo?"

"Hugo?" he said, in bewildered inquiry.

"Yes, Hugo, that your Irish friend, Captain Patrickson, gave you, and that you asked me to keep for you when you went away."

"Oh, yes, of course. How thunderingly idiotic of me! But you know, Mary, I have had so many dogs since I went away that it is no wonder I forgot this one. Come, old fellow, come and make friends with your master," holding out his hands.

But the dog drew back with an ominous growl that displayed his teeth, still fairly perfect and formidable-looking, and stood eyeing the Baronet with no friendly glance.

"Doesn't seem inclined to pal," remarked Humfrey.

"No," agreed his cousin, a little shocked at the vulgarity of the expression. "I suppose you won't want him, Humfrey? You will let me keep him?" and Miss Castlemaine's grey eyes wandered a trifle anxiously from the dog to the man.

"Keep him? Oh, certainly," he returned, politely. "It would be no use my taking him to Castlemaine. I am certain he would not stay there an hour—unless you were there too!" he added, in a lower tone.

"I suppose you will keep a pack of hounds?" said Miss Castlemaine, moving down the path.

"No, I don't think so. I don't care much for hunting."

"Not care for hunting!" she exclaimed, in amazement. "Why, you used to be so fond of it."

"Yes," said Humfrey, biting his lips, while a flush stole over his face, "only a man's tastes alter as he grows older. It is rather a violent exercise."

"Yes. Still, some men hunt when they are over sixty."

"More fools they!" rejoined her cousin, roughly, and then silence fell between them and they walked on without saying a word.

They found Mrs. Castlemaine busy in the garden, and she was so overcome at the sight of Humfrey that she rose hastily from her knees, and, shedding her garden-gloves with marvellous rapidity, precipitated herself into his arms, exclaiming,—

"My dear, dear Humfrey! I am so delighted to see you. I knew you would come back to us some day! Well, you haven't altered much my dear!" was her verdict after closely scrutinising him. "If it weren't for the beard, hardly at all, except that you have grown more like your father." "All the Castlemaines resemble one another strongly," he said, lightly.

Except Mary, remarked his aunt. "She is too fair for a Castlemaine."

"Mary resembles you," he told her as they sauntered back to the house, where Hugo greeted them with a fresh volley of savage growls.

"Yes she does. She is certainly not as dark as her father."

"No; and she is handsomer than ever!" he said when she went into the kitchen on some domestic errand, and left them alone together. "I am glad you think so," sighed the widow. "She has had some wonderfully good offers—brilliant ones—and she has refused them all."

"Is—it—it—or—my account, aunt?" he asked with curious hesitation and embarrassment.

"Well, Humfrey, if I speak the truth, I must say I think it is."

"Then you think I may hope, aunt? You think she still cares for me?" he went on, a terrible anxiety underlying his tone of semi-indifference.

"I think so, my dear Humfrey; only—"

"Only what?" he interrupted quickly as she paused.

"Mary is very proud. You have been a long time away. You never wrote, you never sent a message or word to her after that last short letter when you had been robbed in the diggings of everything you possessed. She is sensitive—her pride has been wounded. Deeply attached as I know she is to you, I feel you must be extremely cautious and careful, or you will ruin all. That is all, if you wish to make Mary your wife."

"It is the dearest wish of my heart!" he exclaimed, fervently, "and aunt," seizing her hand between both his in a tenacious grip. "I beseech you to help me in this matter! Give me the benefit of your advice and experience. One woman knows and understands another as a man never can. Tell me when you see I have pained or offended her. Let me know what she says of me that may be unfavourable, in order that I may alter what she does not like, and try to become what she would wish. Do this, aunt, and I shall bless you!"

"I will do my best!" rejoined the widow, sedately, concealing her delicious joy, "only a great deal must necessarily rest with yourself."

"You wish Mary to become my wife?" he asked suddenly, fixing his dark eyes on her in a piercing glance.

"Why, yes; certainly I do!" rejoined Mrs. Castlemaine, frankly. "Naturally I do. The eyes of all Ling and Castlemaine will be turned on us, and speculation will be rife, as it was ten years ago, when you quarrelled with your father about Mary, and left Castlemaine."

"Yes, yes, of course. I understand. You think Mary is just a trifle compromised, and that it would be better for her to be Lady Castlemaine."

"Not exactly compromised. Still it would be better for her to marry you since your names have been so long coupled together as lovers."

"Yes. I suppose, however, Mary would not care for that?"

"Not in the least. As you well know, she is of a very independent turn of mind, and treats the gossips with supreme scorn and contempt."

"Quite right!" he exclaimed, warmly. "She shows her good sense. And what a charming wife she will make!" he added, with a quick sigh, as she passed the window, holding a huge cabbage-leaf full of strawberries in her white hands, the ruddy colour of the fruit contrasting charmingly with the pale blue of her gown.

"She will make a useful wife. Mary is no fine lady."

"She will make a very lovely one!" he said in low tones, that had a flavour of keen appreciation in them, as she appeared at the door, still bearing the pile of ruddy fruit and told them dinner was ready.

"You will stay, of course, Humfrey, and share our plain fare?" said his aunt.

"I shall be delighted to!" responded the Baronet, cordially; "and I like the plain fare."

"You have changed very much then," observed Mary, rather coldly, as they all entered the little dining-room, and she laid her luscious spoil on a glass dish.

"Have I?" he said, curiously enough, as he fumbled with and creased his serviette, though his eyes gleamed curiously as he looked at her.

"Yes. You always chose made dishes and highly seasoned condiments in preference to plain roast or boiled!"

"Ah! You see a man grows wiser as he grows older."

"Sometimes," she rejoined, drily, for her cousin's words and manner irritated her; she hardly knew why, only that he seemed so different from what he had been.

It hurt her to see how his manners at the table had deteriorated, how changed he was from the bright, gay, winsome young fellow who had won her heart, and kept her faithful to a mere memory for ten long years.

CHAPTER V.

Sir Humfrey seemed in no hurry to leave The Cot. He had been away a decade, and had not seen his early love for all that time; but now that he was once more with her he did not appear inclined to deprive himself of the pleasure of her society.

At last, about half-past six, after swallowing four or five cups of tea, and demolishing a pile of home-made tea-cakes, he reluctantly took his departure, after accepting Mrs. Castlemaine's pressing invitation to dine with them on the morrow.

He looked back two or three times as he went towards his own demesne; but though Mrs. Castlemaine's portly figure remained at The Cot gate, the one he looked for in the pale blue gown had disappeared.

"Doesn't much look as though she was spoony on me," he soliloquised a trifle ruthlessly, as he strode on under the welcome shade of his own oaks and elms. "Curious thing, a female's instinct. Stronger than anything I know. I must conquer it. I must talk more of the past. I will look up some of our old love-passages," with a queer burst of laughter that startled the squirrels amid the well-leaved branches, and the deer amongst the bracken and lush grasses.

"There are a good many noted down in the pocket-book," and drawing it from his breast-pocket he tossed down his hat on the grass, as though its pressure hurt his head, and stood in the full glare of the evening sun, that was tingling all the western sky with his ruddy glow, studying it intently.

It was just at this minute that Lucky Biggs, who had been on an errand to the great house, came tripping gaily along, looking, despite her twenty-five years, a mere girl, with her rosy, infantile face and big blue eyes.

She was unconscious of the Baronet's presence until exactly opposite him, when, raising her eyes, she saw him, every line and feature of his dark, stern face displayed by the sun's searching light.

For a moment she stood, as if turned to stone, gazing at him. Then, with a scream she shrieked out:

"Peter! Peter! is it your ghost?" and without waiting to see if what she supposed was a spectre would reply, she dashed off towards the park gates as fast as she could go.

"D—n the fool!" muttered the Baronet, savagely, as he picked up his hat and hurried on to the house, looking as black as thunder.

Meanwhile, Lucky ran, as though pursued by a crowd of demons, right through the village, until she arrived at her grandmother's cottage, into which she burst like a whirlwind.

"Lork a' mercy, what's to matter wi' ye?" exclaimed the old woman, startled and put out at this sudden and obstreperous entry.

"Oh! Granny, granny!" cried the girl, throwing herself into a chair and rocking herself backwards and forwards. "Oh! Granny, I've seen his ghost!"

"His ghost! Whose ghost?" asked the dame, angrily.

"Peter's, granny, Peter's. Oh! dearie me, oh! dearie me!"

"What did ye see the ghost, Lucky?" asked her red-headed brother, who was stoop-

ing over the fire stirring something in a saucepan—probably a fowl that he had robbed from a neighbouring hen roost.

"In the park," moaned Lucky, her face hidden in her hands. "I were comin' from Castle-maine, an' just as I got to King's Oak, what should I see but Peter standin' under it with a letter in his hand. He were dressed in a grey coat, just like the one he had afore he went away, an' I believe he wanted to give me that letter, only I was so frightened I just took and runned off here as fast as ever I could. Oh! dearie me—oh! dearie me."

"Ye cannot see ghosts. I dunt b'lieve in sich things," announced old Mrs. Biggs from the cavernous depths of her armchair. "Ye must ha' fancied ye saw sunthin', Lucky, child."

"No, no, granny. I seed him sure enough. There he was, standin' as I've seen him a hundred times when he was keeper to Sir Nicholas, standin' in the park and preserves, wi' one leg a little afore the other, and his head a wee bit bent."

"I knows who it was ye saw!" exclaimed red-head, a sudden light flashing across his dull brain. "Ave course, it were Sir Humfrey, 'im as cummed home yesternight."

"No, no, John," shaking her pretty head, sadly, "'t weren't Mister Humfrey. Haven't I seen him often enough to know him? 'Twas Peter, my Peter! Sure, shouldn't I know his dark eyes ennywhere, them as has so often looked into mine?"

"One Castlemaine's as loike another as two peas in a pod," remarked Granny, oracularly.

"An' Peter was a Castlemaine as much as Mister Humfrey, onny to wrong soide o' te blanket, Lucky, ye know."

"I know, granny; only this wasn't Mister Humfrey. No, it was Peter, an' he's dead an' gone an' left me, an' I shall never, never see him again!" and she set to and wept with hearty goodwill, and refused to be comforted by either grandmother or brother, or to believe that she had seen anything save Peter's ghost.

When Sir Humfrey arrived at the house he was in no end of a bad temper, and sworn roundly at the servants because the dinner did not appear by magic on the table the instant he came in.

He looked so like the old Baronet as he stood cursing and storming on the hearthrug in the dining-room that the men shrank away from him, and even stately, bulbous-nosed old Trail secretly hoped he was not going to turn out like his father, an ill-tempered martinet, whom it would be impossible to please.

The secret opinion of the big-wigs who came and ate his four-year-old mutton and drank his comet claret was that young Castlemaine was "snobbish." There was no other word for his *fauz pas* and ill-manners. Montague was half broken-hearted over his client's falling away from the early gracious promise of his youth, and tendered some good advice, which was roughly refused.

The fact was, Sir Humfrey wanted ready money—rather a large sum—and he instructed the lawyer to sell out certain bonds, and if need be to get some of the timber in the park cut down. To the latter Montague objected strongly, and in the end the old trees were spared, for he managed to get for the Baronet the sum he wanted—namely, four thousand pounds, which, oddly enough, he kept in a bureau in his bedroom—two hundred pounds in gold, the rest in five and ten-pound notes, all neatly packed in a wallet, which could be conveniently strapped round his waist in two minutes.

Sir Humfrey grew less fidgety when he had the money, and turned his thoughts to love and matrimony. He spent quite half his time at his aunt's cottage, and let Mary see plainly that he thought she was bound to him by every means in his power. But she never acknowledged this or appeared to notice it, and her manner to him was so cold and repellent that sometimes he lost heart and temper

at the same time, and nearly gave up the hope of ever calling her "wife."

Between the cousins there seemed to be a barrier—a chasm which nothing could bridge. Mary, strangely enough, felt no sympathy for this man, in whom she had once been so entirely bound up, and she experienced a feeling of most bitter anguish when she realised that this was so. All the old love and affection seemed to have died out.

His touch made her shudder, his laugh jarred on her nerves, his voice, his manners, were hateful to her. She felt she could never keep her promise and marry him, and she thoroughly sympathised with Hugo in his plainly-shown hatred of the Baronet.

Mrs. Castlemaine was a strong ally of her nephew's, and almost daily urged Mary to give him a definite answer, to consent to become Lady Castlemaine. This, however, Mary would not do. She put off giving a decisive answer in an unaccountable fashion. Still, her mother often made engagements for her with her cousin, which she could not get out of; and one afternoon, late in August, she found herself riding along beside him on one of his horses by the newly-reaped fields, where the stubble shone like spun silk, listening to his rather clumsy wooing with ill-concealed impatience.

Just as they were passing an outlying farm a man in a smock-frock jumped off a gate and stood in the road staring at them in rather an impudent fashion—that is, he stared at Sir Humfrey.

As the Baronet's eyes lighted on this man his face grew ashy pale, and his hand closed so heavily on the curb that the chestnut he was riding reared up, and then plunged forward.

"Banbury is fresh and wants a gallop!" he said, hoarsely. "Shall we go for a stretch on the grass?"

"Yes," she assented, and away the horses flew, leaving the man in the smock-frock far behind.

But that evening, as Sir Humfrey rode the tired chestnut through his park gates, the same man sprang forward from behind a tree.

"Be charitable to a poor fellow who has lost every penny he possesses," he whined, laying a hand on the chestnut's bridle.

"Do you know, fellow, that you are trespassing, and can be prosecuted!" shouted the Baronet, angrily.

"Yes. Trespassing on Sir Humfrey Castlemaine's property, and he is the only person who can prosecute me."

"Curse you, take that!" roared Sir Humfrey, cutting at the man savagely with his whip, who, putting up his hands to protect his face, received the blow on them.

"I'll make you pay for these, my gentleman," muttered the stranger, looking at the white weals on his hands. "You'll travel sooner than you thought."

"Where is the other?" Sir Humfrey said to himself many and many a time that night, and for the next month, and then at the end of that time the reply came.

It was a fine moonlight September evening, and after finishing his dinner he lit a cigar, and strolled out through the park towards The Cot, where he had not paid his accustomed visit. When near the gates he paused, for he heard a footfall coming along the road—a firm, even footfall—that sent a shuddering fear to his heart, and he stood, as if turned to stone, waiting.

Nearer and nearer came the step, and then a tall man passed by, apparently going to The Cot—a man who turned his head, and looked in at the great bronze gate, with the horse's head on the top, and who was so like the listener, save and except that he lacked a beard, that it was like seeing the reflection of his own face in a mirror.

"The game's up!" he muttered, as the stranger passed on, and swung back the gate of The Cot. "It's time to go!" and as his

hand instinctively stole to feel if the wallet and belt that he had worn round his waist for the last month was safe, he set off at a rapid pace through the village of Castlemaine.

Mary was sauntering between the trim garden paths with down-bent head and heavy heart, when the clang of the opening gate made her look up, and she saw, in the bright light of the full moon, the face that she knew belonged to the man she had loved and waited for so long, and that was so like and yet so different from that other face.

"Humfrey!" she cried, her tones unsteady with a great joy.

"My own beloved Mary!" said the stranger, making one step forward, and taking her in his arms; and, instead of shrinking from him, she held up her lips for that kiss they had waited for so long.

"Yes, dearest," said the real Humfrey an hour later, as he sat with his arm round his betrothed's waist, and her fair head resting contentedly against his shoulder. "It was that rascal of a brother of mine, Peter Brasdale. We were in the same regiment in Africa and fought side by side at Colenso and Talana, and so was my foster-brother, Jeff Morton. Poor Jeff was the first knocked over, then I got an ugly crack on the head, and a bullet through my shoulder, and I was sent to the hospital at Winburg. While there I became delirious and very ill; and Peter, being wounded, was sent there also, but soon became convalescent. He claimed kinship with me, and under pretence of helping to nurse me, managed to get possession of my pocket-book and some letters. This was after he saw Montague's advertisement. He thought he was safe. I had enlisted as John Smith. No one knew who I really was save Morton, and when Peter left Jeff was too ill to speak, and I was delirious, and not expected to live a week. You know, Sir Nicholas gave him a fairly good education, and he had been accustomed to speak to gentlefolks, so he had picked up some of the manners of the gentry. Only, Montague tells me he betrayed himself now and then."

"He was an utter snob!" said Mary, angrily, thinking of the sweet speeches to which she had reluctantly listened from the impostor's lips.

"I suppose he could not control himself on all occasions. It was Morton who came over here, and, hearing about the return of the young Castlemaine, came down to verify his suspicions about Peter. He did verify them, and then we communicated with Montague."

"What will he do?"

"To-morrow he goes to Castlemaine to eject my precious half-brother."

But on the morrow, when the lawyer made his appearance at the great house, there was not a trace of Peter Brasdale nor of the four thousand pounds he had cunningly contrived to get into his clutches.

He got clear off with it, and the real Sir Humfrey refused to set the myrmidons of the law on his track.

"Let him have the money," he said, drawing Mary into his embrace. "My father ought to have left him something. I have plenty without it, and what I prize most in the whole world is mine, and safe from the wolf's clutches. What should I have done, sweetheart, if you had listened to his spurious pleadings and married him?"

"I should never have done that, Humfrey," she answered, fondly, raising a pair of love-lit grey eyes to his. "My instinct warned me that he was not the man I loved, and—"

"Who loves you," whispered Humfrey, drawing her arms around his throat, and kissing her willing lips again and again.

[THE END.]

KENNETH'S CHOICE

By FLORENCE HODGKINSON

(Author of "Dolly's Legacy," "Ivy's Peril," "Guy Forrester's Secret," etc., etc.).

CHAPTER XVI.

IT had been an awful blow to Kenneth, Earl of Combermere, when he discovered his own secret. It had seemed to him, as he stood before the fair pictured form of the Lily Maid of Asbelot that, dearly as he loved her, the fact that it was widely believed her father's hand had made his mother a widow must for all separate them—that not even love such as his could sanctify the union between the family of a murderer and that of his victim.

Kenneth left the Royal Academy full of good (?) resolutions for the prudent ordering of his future. He went to the very place where such prudent plans would be encouraged; and yet that first visit to Lady Combermere and the granddaughter in Cadogan Place quite upset all Kenneth's wise resolutions.

Margaret St. Clune spoke slightly of her foster-sister, and Kenneth found himself almost hating her on the spot. Not all Lady Combermere's praises of his cousin could change Kenneth's opinion of her. And when he left the house his mind was quite made up; since an insuperable barrier loomed between him and Nell he would never marry at all.

But then the question *would* crop up, *was* the barrier unsurpassable? He asked Mr. Ashwin if there would be no chance of proving poor Gordon's innocence, and then came upon him the extraordinary scene at his mother's house. Her protestation that she had seen her husband's ghost; Emily Taylor's simple verdict that a man who could let himself be parted from the girl he loved because an accusation rested on her father's name, could not know what real love was. It all happened within twelve hours—the discovery of his love for Nell, his prudent resolutions then fading away, the love-conquering scruples, and the final choice that nothing but her own deed should come between him and Nell.

But fate was assuredly against true love in this case. Poor Kenneth, as we know, received a wound in his ghostly encounter, and for more than three weeks was almost an invalid, his sole acquaintance with the world outside Cadogan Place being (and that only after a fortnight's seclusion) a daily drive with his hostess.

He did not bear the suspense well. He was devoured by an intense anxiety to see Nell and plead his cause, but he was saved one pang. He knew well all the papers had chronicled his illness, though he had passed in Paris as "Mr. St. Clune."

Nell was aware of his true rank. She would not think he had forgotten his little friend, because he neither wrote nor called. She would know he was too ill to do either.

One thing surprised him. Bruce Carew neither came nor sent to inquire after him. Day after day the young Earl insisted on the cards left at the door being brought to him. He plodded through the contents of the silver salver day after day, but he never saw the name of the kind, eccentric, artist, and this omission made him the more eager to go to Oakley Cottage and see his friends; so it was almost with a boyish exultation he dressed himself on Monday to go out for the first time alone.

Of course Lady Combermere's carriage was at his disposal. The Countess would dearly have liked to go in it herself, and wait outside her favourite's chambers, while he arranged the papers and answered the correspondence, which were the avowed object of his expedition; but Kenneth told her, smiling, there was no carriage approach to the particular part of the Temple where he resided, and that he felt

quite strong, and a few hours' literary labours would not hurt him in the least.

"Indeed," continued the young Earl, gaily, "I begin to think I must have been a shocking impostor all this time; I feel so well and strong. I shall most likely go on to Fulham and look up Carew if I keep as well as I am, so don't expect me much before dinner."

A pretty pink colour came into Lady Combermere's cheeks. She blushed like a girl.

"I do so wish, Kenneth, you would bring Mr. Carew in to dinner. It would make me feel almost young again to meet him once more. It is years and years since I have seen him."

"I will give the message, Aunt Lucy, but I can't answer for him. Carew has a wholesome dread of titles. He may not feel equal to seeing a Countess."

"Tell him to think of me as Lucy Talbot."

"You shall be obeyed, aunty," and Kenneth smiled almost lustfully. "Wish me good luck."

"My dear boy, what are you going to do?" He had no mind to tell her.

"It is my first return to active life since the accident, and you know that fellow's stiletto *might* have finished me, so I think you ought to wish me good luck."

"My dear boy, you know I wish it you with all my heart." And with those words ringing in his ears Lord Combermere went out into the summer sunshine, for time had passed since his return from Paris, and bright June had come.

He went to his chambers first. Kenneth would have scorned to tell or act a lie. He had said to Lady Combermere he was going to "see after things in the Temple," and he did so. Besides, two was much too early for Fulham, so he opened letters and answered them with tolerable attention, and was fairly engrossed in his task when the housekeeper came bustling up, and said a gentleman wished to see him.

Kenneth glanced at the card—"Edward Mayo!" he muttered to himself. "What can he want? Well, I always liked the fellow; and as he is to have Emily some day, and I regard her as a sister, I may as well cultivate his acquaintance."

The two men shook hands. The clergyman made all suitable inquiries for the Earl's health, and then a strange silence crept over them both.

"I hardly know how to tell you what has brought me here," began Mr. Mayo at last. "I fear you will think me taking an unwarrantable liberty, but I have consulted a—friend of mine who knows you better far than I do, and she assured me I ought to come even if you were offended."

"My dear fellow," said Kenneth, simply, "I am not given to take offence, and if Miss Taylor—of course she is the friend you speak of—advised you to come to me I am sure you were right to come. I can't promise to agree with what you say, but I will listen patiently and believe in your motive if I can't in your arguments."

Poor Mr. Mayo looked as if he hated the task before him.

"I think you have heard from Emily I am curate of Marden, Lord Combermere? I live in the very house once occupied by your cousin, Miss St. Clune, and her foster-mother."

Kenneth smiled.

"I see my suspicions were wrong. I really believed you had come to scold me on the matter of ghosts; and that you would prove the whole affair at my mother's a mere hallucination. Of course, I know you live at Marden—and a very pretty place it is."

"Yes. You see, living there, Lord Combermere, I could not help hearing things, and I soon found out that no one in the place knew the true name and rank of the young lady who had lived among them as Queenie Marsh."

"I believe that was a fancy of her own. It was given out she was going to reside with her grandmother, and not even her foster-mother heard her address."

"Yes. It was not until I spent a few days at Whitechapel last week, and heard from Emily of Miss St. Clune's former history, that I had any proof of her connection with the beautiful girl who left Marden so suddenly. I had suspected it, I own."

Lord Combermere looked bewildered.

"I assure you I have not the least idea what you are driving at. I have promised you not to be offended. Can't you speak plainly? Forgive me if I seem irritable, but I have been very ill, and I never could bear hints patiently!"

"May I ask you one question, my lord? Are you engaged to Miss St. Clune?"

"No. And if you care to hear it, I never shall. The whole world may know that!"

"Then I can speak openly. I have a friend"—his voice shook with strong emotion—"who is at the point of death—sent there, Lord Combermere, by your cousin's hand. He was the finest, tenderest-hearted man I ever met! A brave sailor, a frank, open-hearted gentleman, who, if he had not a long line of titled ancestors, and that external polish mingling in the best society alone can give, yet might have moved in the highest circles as one of Nature's noblemen. The son and heir of the richest man in Marden, he loved Queenie Marsh as his own soul. Knowing her mother's objections to lovers, he proposed to her privately, and was accepted. A week before her mother's death he sailed on his last voyage; in less than three months he was to return and claim his bride. His father would yield them the fine old mansion he had bought at Marden and settle eight hundred a year on them. Truly it was a brilliant prospect for a girl living in extreme poverty."

"And she forsook him?"

"She did worse. If she had written to Austin Brooks, telling him frankly of her altered fortunes, and that she must now look higher than a mere country gentleman, I for one could have forgiven her; but she went off without leaving him the slightest clue to her whereabouts; and weeks later sent him a note—still no address—saying she was with her grandmother, who hated all such things as lovers and engagements. Until she came of age she could not marry him. She would not seek to bind him; he should be free; only until she read of his marriage to another she should think herself his fiancée, and wear his ring."

"And she is a St. Clune," there was passionate indignation in Kenneth's voice. "Of course, I understand the motive of her letter—it was to keep her lover quiet until she was actually married."

"Until she was Lady Combermere, my lord," said Mr. Mayo, shortly. "Yes, the letter was bad enough, but there is worse to come."

Kenneth threw up his hands.

"What can be worse than treachery!"

The curate went on with the story of Austin Brooks's life in London, and the strange events which preceded his illness. He said the young man's father had spared neither pains nor expense to unearth the truth; and it was discovered, after an infinitude of trouble, that the letter which sent Austin forth in such high spirits as related by Mrs. Milner was signed "his own Queenie," and had appointed a meeting at a certain house in a lonely private road in a distant suburb.

The note was placed by Mr. Mayo in Lord Combermere's hands, and he said at once,

"Yes, it is her writing—not a doubt of it. And this was—when?"

"A fortnight ago. Mr. Brooks's absence lasted a week, and it is now nearly as long since we were summoned to his sick bed. I cannot explain to you *how* it was, but some instinct told me, even before this letter was found, his sufferings had come though the girl he loved. There was a fancy portrait in his rooms which he valued from its strong resemblance to 'Queenie.' Getting leave of absence from the Vicar, I went down to Whitechapel, risking your mother's thinking my

intrusion a presumption; then I showed the picture to Emily, who told me at once it was a likeness of Miss St. Clune in fancy dress. I told Emily all I knew, and she urged me to come to you. I had to go back to Marden in time for Sunday's duties, but I came up by the first train to-day, and after learning the latest particulars from Mr. Brooks I set out to try and find you."

Poor Kenneth was trembling like a man with the ague. He was passionately fond of Combermere Abbey, he dearly loved his grand old name; and lo! both were possessed by a woman whose conduct was a disgrace and scandal to her sex! It really seemed to Kenneth he could never hold up his head again.

One comfort he had—and one alone.

"My choice was made," thought the poor fellow to himself before he knew this. "I had fixed in my mind to refuse to marry her. Thank Heaven, I shall not go to my darling because the character of the woman I meant to marry is so vile that no gold could gild over its blot. I had made up my mind to tell Nell of my love, and do what life and mind could to win hers in return, before ever I dreamed of the wickedness concealed beneath my cousin's lovely face!"

But he had not heard all. It dawned on him slowly there was more to come. He tried to collect his thoughts. He looked again at the note in Margaret's writing, which yet lay in his hand.

"And this meeting! Did it take place?"

"I only heard the truth of that to-day. Lord Combermere, you look weak and tired. Are you sure you can bear to listen to it?"

"I would rather hear *all*," And Kenneth pouring himself out a tumbler of water drank it at one draught. "Please go on."

"Mr. Brooks sent down a detective to see the house and make inquiries. At first the poor old man thought Austin's talk the mere ravings of delirium, but the doctor was a far-seeing man, and he guessed the account was of no fancied honours, but of something actually endured by the poor sufferer. By his advice a skilled detective went down to Elmer's End to make inquiries."

"Elmer's End! What an extraordinary place to choose—so difficult of access, so small, and so remote!"

"All those drawbacks as you think them were so many advantages. The house was old, and had been to let so long that the landlord was not likely to be too particular as to his tenants' antecedents. The situation was so lonely I don't suppose a dozen persons passed down the road in the course of a day."

"And Margaret met him there?"

"She did not. A respectable woman—so the detective learned after many inquiries—and her husband were the new tenants of Meadowbank, and they gave out they were expecting an invalid visitor. The date they fixed for his arrival is the one named by Miss St. Clune for the meeting. He was seen to go in there. Nothing further can be learned except that the day after his return to London the key of Meadowbank was sent to the landlord with a quarter's rent in gold in a registered packet. The man and his wife had disappeared. They owed no one a half-penny; no one had thought their flight extraordinary, the general impression being that Meadowbank was so gloomy and deserted no one would be likely to stop there."

"And you think—?"

"Poor Austin's ravings supply the rest of the narrative. From them we gather he was kept shut up in a cellar without furniture and kept without light; almost without food, to induce him to swear to give up all claim on his faithless fiancée, and to promise silence on her past when she married her noble lover, the Earl of Combermere."

"This is terrible!"

"So I felt—Emily and I consulted together before we knew the last link in the story,

but even then we felt that even if you did not believe us, if you treated the tale with scorn and quarrelled with us both, our duty was to let you know the truth. Better that you should break your heart at parting from your beautiful cousin than give your name to one who has acted inhumanly."

"I never meant to marry her. She never inspired me with any feeling of regard. I admit she is beautiful, but even her beauty had no power to charm me."

"The treatment of her foster-sister is enough to show what she is."

Kenneth started.

"Nell needs no patronage from Miss St. Clune," he said, proudly. "She is the adopted daughter of an artist and his wife, who love her as their own child, and will spare no pains to make her happy."

"And who cast her adrift last Thursday evening to starve, beg, or sin, as seemed best to her. I think those people must be of much the same calibre as your cousin, Lord Combermere."

Kenneth was white as death. He clutched wildly at the table for support.

"Be merciful! For pity sake tell me all, you know. Where is Nell? What has become of her? Don't keep me in suspense. You don't know what this is to me. I love her as my own soul. It was my dearest wish to call her my wife, and but for your visit I should have been at Fulham before now to tell her so."

"You would not have found her. I only heard the story on Saturday, but it made my blood boil. Mr. Brooks, who knew me at Marden before her troubles began, met her wandering alone in London by daylight, looking for some humble lodging not beyond her means."

"He is not what you would call a gentleman," Lord Combermere, but he has a father's heart. He went up to her, and spoke to her. At first she refused his kindness; she could not forget, she said, all he and his had suffered through her foster-sister. Besides, the reason which had made Mrs. Ainslie cast her out might turn him, too, into her foe. He got the truth out of her somehow. Poor child! It seems her father had been accused of murder, and died before his innocence could be proved. The mother took a morbid view of his guilt, changed her name, and never spoke of her past."

"It must have come on the poor girl like a thunder-bolt. She went out, leaving Mrs. Ainslie, her loving, adopted mother. In her absence Miss St. Clune—from what motive one is at a loss to tell, unless mere cruelty—swept down upon the Cottage with the story of the past. Mrs. Ainslie confronted Nell with it on her return, and would not believe the girl was as innocent of deception as herself then. She cast her adrift."

"Where was Bruce Carew? Mrs. Ainslie's brother, I mean. Surely he never turned against Nell?"

"He is in Africa. Mr. Ainslie was absent. The lady seems to have been alone."

"And I thought her a good woman."

"Well, perhaps she thought so, too. You need not be anxious about Miss Marsh, Lord Combermere. Old Mr. Brooks acted by her as kindly as though she had been the child of a dear friend. He took her to a lady's house for the night, and the next morning left his sick son's room to go with her to Marden and institute her as companion to his crippled daughter."

"Mopsy Brooks told me herself on Sunday she loved Nell already, and the poor sickly child is very staunch in her affections. It might have meant starvation, misery, death, that cruel expulsion from Fulham. But, thanks to Providence, Miss St. Clune's malice has only sent her foster-sister back to the home of her childhood to fill an honourable post in a good man's house."

"Heaven bless him!" cried Lord Combermere. "I should like to see him and thank him, but I expect he hates the sound of my name!"

"No, he's too just for that. He *might* have done so had you married Miss St. Clune, but he is too kind to bear malice for your having unconsciously been his boy's rival."

Kenneth drew a long breath.

"I should like to go to Marden."

"I must beg you not to think of it at present. You are something of an invalid, and must not trifle with yourself!"

"But I want to see Nell!"

"I think I can answer for it she will not run away. I return to-night, and I will gladly take any message for you. Besides, Lord Combermere, I think your duty calls on you to remain in town!"

"My duty!"

"I do not ask you to publish the story I have told you. I can understand the pain it would give you, but surely the Countess of Combermere should hear the true character of the girl she loves! In justice to the poor fellow whose life she has wrecked Miss St. Clune ought not to go scot free."

"True; but my brain feels on fire. I don't think I could talk to her. The very sight of her would make me shudder!"

"The revelation should not fall on you; indeed, it ought not to do so. Couldn't Mr. Ashwin undertake it?"

"I have not seen Mr. Ashwin for ages—not since my encounter with the ghost. I believe he makes it a point of conscience never to go to Lady Combermere's if he can possibly help it, and he has set his heart on finding out the truth of the strange occurrence which alarmed my mother, and might have had such terrible results for me!"

"I believe he *has* discovered the truth!"

"Impossible!"

"The man who personated Mr. Marks did me the honour to break into my cottage the night following your encounter with him. He abstracted some letters from Miss Taylor relating to Mrs. Marks's house. Fortunately the Vicar saw him (before his little essay at house-breaking), and is a good hand at drawing. His sketch of my unwelcome visitor would pass anywhere, Mr. Ashwin says, for a picture of your stepfather. An old servant of Mrs. Marsh's absconded with him, and wrote me a kind of valedictory letter, saying she had been his wife for years. The sketch of the man and another of poor Sally have been handed to the detective, and he has made two most important discoveries. The man's portrait answers in all particulars to a step-brother of Mr. Marks, who was a kind of family ne'er-do-well, and had not been heard of for some months at the time of the lawyer's murder. The other discovery is yet more strange. This man and his wife are declared to be the couple who took Meadow Bank and kept Austin Brooks a prisoner there!"

"But their object?"

"Money on his. No doubt Miss St. Clune promised liberal terms; but the woman had lived with Mrs. Marsh for years, and loved your cousin devotedly. *She* acted most likely from affection to her nursing."

"It sounds wonderful!"

"Doesn't it. Of course there is a great deal to be explained. Why has this man kept quiet all these years if money was his object, seeing he would have had more chance of working on your mother's feelings earlier? Then why did not Mr. Marks confide in his wife the existence of this relation with such an extraordinary resemblance to himself?"

"It explains one thing," said Kenneth dreamily. "Marks was just the kind of man to make a poor relation wear his old clothes; that is how he got the jet studs. Do you know—though I am as sceptical about ghosts as you can be—when I saw the three identical Maltese crosses my stepfather always wore in his shirt front I trembled!"

"I can well believe it. It is wonderful how secret Mr. Marks kept the existence of this brother. Mr. Ashwin had never heard of him. It was only by me asking a very old man who had once been clerk to the firm of Trevlyn and Marks we heard anything at all!"

"And he remembered him?"

"Perfectly, and said your stepfather was annoyed at the resemblance (which bearing in mind his brother's disreputable character is hardly surprising); he did everything in his power to alter it, but all his efforts were fruitless. If he shaved his brother shaved, too; if he wore short hair or long hair, hair parted or hair brushed straight, his faithful follower imitated him exactly. At last the man's conduct was so outrageous Mr. Trevlyn forbade him the office, and he only turned up again a few weeks before the murder, when he promised to go to Australia if his brother would advance him a certain sum to begin life with. As he made no sign all through the trial, and never even applied to know the provisions of the will, the conclusion Mr. Ashwin takes is that he got the money, and had sailed for the Antipodes before his brother's murder."

A sudden fancy flashed through Kenneth's mind, so bright that he felt it was almost impossible. He dismissed it as being born only of his own wishes, and did not even confide it to the sympathetic young curate.

"You seem to have been the moving-power in all this business, Mr. Mayo! While I have been laid aside almost as helpless as a log you have been making yourself invaluable. I am sure I can never forget your kindness."

Mr. Mayo smiled.

"I am meeting with a very different reception from the one I expected. I must confess I came here to-day most reluctantly."

"You surely did not think me so infatuated with Miss St. Clune as to be her blind partisan?"

"I thought you would resent my story, not so much on her account as that it touched your family pride. I learned how strong that is in my intercourse with the late Earl."

Kenneth looked perplexed.

"I suppose it is her having lived apart from us all so long. But I never seem to realise my cousin Margaret is a St. Clune."

"Will Lady Combermere take the matter to heart, do you think?"

"I fear it will be a terrible blow to her. She has continued to shut her eyes to all imperfections in Margaret, and regards her as a kind of sacred legacy from her husband."

"And you agree she should be told?"

"Yes. I go further. I think anyone who sought to marry my cousin should be warned of her character."

"She is so beautiful, it would not deter many men. I fear she will break more hearts than poor Austin's before her career is finished at the hymeneal altar."

"I wonder whom she will marry?"

"I suppose if she died unmarried the estate would pass to you?"

"I would rather not think of that; the contingency never presented itself to me."

"I own I should like to see you master of Combermere Abbey. The late Earl's will has always seemed to me peculiarly unjust."

"He could hardly divine his granddaughter's character," said Kenneth, gravely. Then, in a different tone, "For me, I have come to the conclusion wealth does not bring happiness. I am tired of London and fashionable life. I possess three hundred a year of my own, and if a certain young lady will only consent to trust herself to me, I think that will be enough for a simple country home; and as I get on in my profession we shall be able to launch out. Will you and Emily be kind neighbours to us, Mayo, if we come and pitch our tent at Marden?"

"An Earl and Countess settle at Marden! The place would lose its head at the idea!"

"I rather fancy I shall drop the title. It would be too absurd for a maid-of-all-work (or would it run to a cook and housemaid?) to address her master as 'my lord.' But these are only vague dreams, Mayo. I have no right to build on Miss Marsh's consent, since I have never even hinted my wishes to her."

"You will be happy if she does consent?" said Edward Mayo, thoughtfully. "Even poverty with such a wife could have no sting. Sally once told me 'Miss Nell's face is like the angels', and when once I had seen her I understood and appreciated the description."

"Poor Sally! Only fancy if your suspicions are correct—she and my mother are sisters-in-law! I hope the mother will never know it. I don't think her pride would ever get over having such a near connection who had been a general servant."

"Poor Sally! But not for your reason. Those years of honest toil are nothing for her to blush about; but she strikes me as a noble character spoilt!"

"By what?"

"By love, or what passes for love in these evil days. Her wild passion for this reckless man has wrecked her whole life, just as trouble and hardships have wrecked her face, which must once have been as beautiful as Miss St. Clune's."

A little travelling clock struck six. Mr. Mayo started to his feet.

"I must be going."

"But we have settled nothing!"

"I am quite sure you have talked long enough; and, indeed, there is nothing more to decide. It rests with you to see Mr. Ashwin, and empower him to break what I have told you to the Countess. He will advise you whether to tell Miss St. Clune of our discovery. For me, I shall stay this night in town, that I may relieve Mr. Brooks in the care of Agstin, then I shall catch the early train to Marden."

"And you will see Nell?"

"I shall call at the Manor House the first thing to give Miss Brooks the last news of her brother."

"And you will tell Nell?"

"Whatever you intrust to me."

Kenneth thought a moment.

"Tell her, please, what a helpless log I have been ever since she returned to England; but that as soon as I can leave the kind nursing of my aunt I shall come to Marden, and that I hope Miss Marsh will be as kind to me as was Miss Ainalie."

"I will remember."

"That will tell her I know all the cruelty she has met with."

"Yes."

"What are you keeping back? I can see there is something you are hiding."

"I think," said Mayo, simply, "the report of your engagement to Miss St. Clune has reached her foster-sister."

There was a bitter expression on Kenneth's face, but he suppressed it.

"She has heard, I daresay, that by Lord Combermere's will I had to choose between wealth with my cousin or poverty without her. Tell her, please, I shall be a poor man all my days. You need say nothing of engagements or marriages, only tell my darling I shall be a poor man all my days. She will know then that Kenneth's choice is made."

The young curate saw his friend off in a cab for Cadogan Place, and then turned in the direction of Austin Brooks's lodgings.

"A noble-hearted fellow!" was his verdict on Lord Combermere. "And Emily is quite right—he will never sell himself for gold. All the St. Clunes have been noted for their truth and honour. The mother of this heartless heiress was a refined, patient gentlewoman. Wherever in the world, then, does Margaret St. Clune inherit her cruel, unwomanly nature!"

At the moment when the curate entered Austin Brooks's sick room, Lord Combermere was opening a telegram from Emily Taylor.

"Come down at once, and bring Mr. Ashwin if you can. The ghost has followed us to Whitechapel!"

(To be concluded next week.)

LORD OF HER LOVE

BY EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS

Author of "Unseen Fires," "Woman Against Woman," etc., etc.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Sadie Lancaster is day-dreaming in one of the classrooms of Park House Academy, when news is brought that Miss Lettway, the Principal, wishes to speak to her. Sadie's uncle, Sir Reginald Derwent, desires her to travel to London at once and there join him.

Sadie has clandestinely married handsome Jack Ronalds, who, hearing of her departure, contrives to travel part of the way with her. He is profuse in his avowal of his love for Sadie, but will not agree to her announcing their marriage. It is soon seen that his profession of love is but the mask of villainy.

Sadie makes the acquaintance of Sir Reginald, who is an invalid, and her heart goes out to him at once in womanly sympathy in his affliction, and she readily acquiesces in his wish to renounce all youthful pleasures for his sake.

CHAPTER IV.

PHILIP BREWER gazes silently at his friend for several moments, and then says, in a low voice:—
"Jack, has it really gone as far as this?"

Jack Ronalds continues to smile and tilt his chair back.

"It has, Phil!" is his answer.

"You are actually married to this girl?"

"As fast as a registrar could bind us. Would you like to see the marriage lines?"

He makes pretence of searching in his pocket, and then stops as he catches a glimpse of the face opposite.

"Why, Phil, you look as solemn as a judge. What ails you?"

Philip Brewer does not answer at first, and as Jack begins to whistle softly he gets up.

"Ronalds," he says, "I have always thought you a bad lot, but on my honour I did not imagine even you could be such a villain."

Jack whistles on for a second.

"Strong words, my friend," he observes shortly.

"They can't be too strong," returns Brewer.

A sneer disfigures the handsome face of Jack Ronalds, his dark blue eyes have an ugly, angry look in them.

"Drop the parson, Phil, it doesn't suit you, old man; besides, if I am a bad lot, I think I have got a fairly good compatriot in yourself."

"Two wrongs don't make a right."

"No; nor two fools a clever man. Come, Phil, don't be an idiot; just cast things over in your mind, and you will see my great coup in not quite such a villainous light."

"Why have you married the girl?" Brewer asks, as he seats himself again; "surely an engagement would—"

Jack Ronalds draws out a handsome cigar case, puts one of its occupants in his mouth, and leisurely lights it.

"A woman's word is never to be trusted," he replies, curdly; "an engagement can be broken. A marriage is a more difficult affair."

"Not with such a past as yours, Jack, my boy—remember that."

Jack scowls.

"No one knows of my past but friends like yourself, Phil."

"You mean that no one knows you over here by your adopted name," Brewer sums up, quietly; "but, after all, aliases are very clumsy, weak dodges."

He stops for a moment, and then adds, quickly:—

"And, by the way, how did you manage that in the registry office? How did you silence her questions, or does she know all?"

"She knows nothing, and she asked no questions. I confess I felt a trifle nervous, but I managed to cover up my signature with the blotting paper, and she was so agitated

she could scarcely hold the pen, much less read what I had written."

Philip Brewer thinks for a few minutes.

"It is a bad business for her, poor girl!" he breaks the silence with.

Jack Ronalds colours hastily.

"By Jove, you are not complimentary to-day, Phil. After all, I have done nothing to shout out about. I have married the girl; if I had compromised her, then you might have called me over the coals."

There is a sneer now on Brewer's face; it says as plainly as words:—

"You would not have hesitated at that if a big stake had not been on hand with the other."

"Well," he asks, as Jack enjoys his cigar, "and what are you going to do next? What share am I to take in your plans?"

"There are heaps of things you can do; but my principal object in wiring you to meet me to-day was to ask you about that bill, you know."

He holds his cigar-case across the table as he speaks.

Brewer selects a weed, and as he trims it he says, quietly:—

"What, the forged bill, you mean?"

Ronalds's brow contracts.

"Hang it all, Phil, be more cautious, walls have ears sometimes."

"Yes, and these walls have uncommon sharp ones, as Nancy, perhaps, could assure us. Well, in consideration of your feelings, I will close the window; there, now to business. That bill, Jack, has been traced to you; there has been an ugly row about it. Cuthbert's trustees are taking the matter up, and swear you shall suffer for it; it is best to be frank with you, but if they do find you it will be seven years to a certainty."

"They won't find me if my pals don't peach. Have you heard what sort of scent they are on now?"

"They think you are abroad—indeed, that is your only safety. No one knows really anything about you, as lots of fellows swear you have sailed for Australia."

Jack is silent for a few moments; his face does not wear a pleasant expression.

"By Heaven! I wish I could have just five minutes alone with Robert Cuthbert, sneaking young fool! I think I would give him a small piece of my mind!"

"I always warned you to be careful how you treated him; he is not your sort. But, after all, he was useful to you, not only in the ordinary way, but in putting you up to the job you have so successfully completed."

"Yes, by Jove!" Jack smiles a little now.

"I can remember how surprised I was when he told me that Derwent had a relation, and what was more to the purpose, a young niece. I little thought then how easy my revenge would be."

"You never told me really why you wanted a revenge on that poor crippled creature. What did he do to you?"

"He hates me as he hated my father. Every time our paths have crossed, Sir Reginald Derwent has done me some small injury."

"Strange!" Philip Brewer says.

"Yes, and the strangest part of all is, that about seven or eight years ago, when I was just knocking about first, my governor and this man were bosom friends. I can remember quite back in my childhood being taken to see him, but apparently I did not conduct myself well, for I was never taken again. Sir Reginald was of real use to my father; I may as well

own that, for it was proved after their split the governor simply never had a penny."

"And could you never discover what their quarrel was?" queries Philip, intently interested.

Jack shakes his head.

"Never. I often tried to sound my father, but he would say nothing, and so by degrees I forgot till Derwent came back from some voyage, then—it was the rummiest thing—if ever I ran against him he seemed to bring me ill-luck. I only saw him once to speak to; he has lost his land steward. I was awfully hard up, and I determined to have a shot for it, so went to him. I shan't forget that meeting in a hurry!"

"Why, what happened?"

Philip forgets his cigar in following the story.

"I was shown into his room; you have seen Derwent, and you know how he can look at a man. He never spoke till I had finished, then he turned to his servant Holroyd, a sanctimonious, hypocritical-looking thief, and said:—

"Show this gentleman out; if ever he dares to approach my house again warn the servants, and treat him as he deserves."

"I was silent for a second, and then I broke out—you may guess pretty hot—but he stopped me."

"Like father like son. I know you are a prodigal, a spendthrift, etc. If there was the smallest good in you I would help you, even though you are the child of a man I hated with a hatred deeper than death; but you are wholly bad. Go, never come near me again; I do not care to think you exist."

Jack's face flushes now with hot anger, and his fist clenched.

"By Heaven, Phil!" he goes on, "he roused the devil in me. I was bursting out, giving him a few unpleasant truths, when his man quietly gripped my shoulder and pushed me away. I thought at first I would struggle, but then it flashed across me that Derwent had several men-servants in the house, and I should come off badly, so I made no resistance, but when I got to the door I turned and swore a curse at him that I would be revenged, and you see I have kept my word."

"You have married his niece, certainly," agrees Philip, "but I fail to see in that a grand revenge."

"Wait. Cuthbert found out through his lawyers that this girl existed, and told me. I put two and two together, and I arrived at a very logical conclusion that she must eventually inherit all Derwent's wealth and property, for it is all unentailed."

"It suited my purpose to disappear for a time, as you know, and I came down here by a lucky fluke, got into that college, and then set myself to work to find out all I could about Sadie. She has been most carefully looked after—no stint of money."

"Just before Easter, when I had become acquainted with the girl, I got information—how, it matters to no one but myself—that Derwent Manor was undergoing extensive alterations and redecorations, and that a whisper was going round that Sir Reginald was coming back to live at the Manor and was bringing with him a young lady, a ward of his. If you remember, you saw me about that time, and when you tried to persuade me to cut it all and make a bolt of it because of that bill, I refused; well, I was resolved in my mind."

"The Easter holidays were fast approaching. I began to make gradual way with Sadie—I am not a bad hand at love-making, and she is very young and simple—luck seemed to smile on me, for at the vacation the old governess was called away by some domestic trouble, and in those three weeks I won—Sadie became my wife."

"Ignorant of anything about you; does she know nothing?"

"She knows and believes just as much as I want her to," is the curt reply.

Philip Brewer is silent.



THE DAWN OF A NEW LOVE.

"Well," he says, after a few moments, "you have succeeded in marring the girl's life, but what about yourself? How are you going to escape that bill, eh?"

"I have two courses open; one is to make Sir Reginald square the thing, and if he has any pride he will do so for his niece's sake and the family honour."

"And supposing he refuses to have anything to say to you or to the niece either? What then?"

Jack smiles superciliously.

"You are no plotter, that is very evident. I am sure on one point. Sir Reginald *must* care something about Sadie—everything goes to prove that; and he will grow to care even more for her if she remains with him, as I intend her to do. She is just one of those gentle, soft-voiced, pretty creatures who will be invaluable as a sick nurse, but who—"

"Falls a bit as a wife," finishes Brewer.

"Exactly," Jack agrees, carelessly. "However, I must not grumble yet, for I have not tested her wifely capabilities. Save for the stolen few meetings we have had, we know little of one another."

Brewer strikes a match and relights his cigar.

"And what will she think of you when she knows more?" he asks.

Jack flushes again; he has rarely seen Philip Brewer in this frame of mind; they have been boon companions so long—have speculated and shared in many a game which ended in some lucrative manner to them. Jack is not wont to class honour and Philip together, and yet he cannot help a sensation that seems to say that, black as he is, Philip would not have acted towards Sadie Lancaster as he has done. The thought rouses his temper.

"Leave me to see to that!" he says, rising and kicking open the window with his foot. What has come to you, Phil? You are not so pure yourself that you can indulge in judging me; remember the old proverb, 'Those who live in glass houses,' etc., etc."

"Granted that I am in myself a portable house of glass, there is one corner of it, Jack, that will be proof against stones; with all my faults I have never deceived or wrecked a girl's life as you have done this niece of Derwent's. It is a cruel wrong to her that she should be made the medium for your revenge. You might have thought of some other plan—or why, if she loves you—why not have revealed yourself to her? Women are strange creatures; appeal to them and you win, where force or deceit never would!"

"Oh, yes, she loves me well enough!" there is no trace of delight in Ronald's tones. "That is apparent to the meanest intelligence. She is the sort to cling to a fellow through thick and thin!"

"If she has any of Derwent's blood in her veins you may some day change that opinion, Jack."

Jack yawns, he feels intensely bored, and the sun is high in the heavens, throwing down a heat which is not conducive to comfort.

"She is his sister's child, I believe, and I am not afraid. I fancy I know Sadie a little better than you, Phil. But come, what do you say, let us adjourn and have some refreshment? Have got to get back to that cursed hole in time for evening prayers."

Brewer rose.

"By-the-by, Jack," he says as they ring for Nancy and order some food, "what is your second course about that bill supposing Derwent does not come up to the scratch?"

"I shall interview Cuthbert."

"Down in Wentworth?"

"Yes."

Philip whistles.

"Try arguments first, and then force, eh?"

Jack yawns, and stretches his arms before he falls lazily on to the sofa.

"Discriminate as ever, Phil," he smiles.

Philip Brewer says nothing, but his fair, blasé face wears a strange expression as he strolls to and fro in the room, and glances ever and again at his friend, whose handsome

eyes are closed in a most comfortable slumber, and a loathing for the double-dealing, shady life he leads creeps into his heart, that not so long ago was as frank and pure as a child's.

Night is falling over the city. It is not dark. The sky is a soft, cloudy gray, in which the stars glisten like jewels.

The roar of the street is abating, though ever and anon carriages and cabs roll swiftly along, bearing their dainty occupants to home or ball.

Sadie, sitting at her window, looks down the wide expanse of Portland-place. At a house quite close some grand entertainment is progressing. She can discern the awning, the red cloth, and the lamps of the broughams waiting, while every now and then faint sounds of music are wafted to her.

She cannot sleep, her brain works on incessantly, and her heart thrills. Alone she goes over the strange events of the day, and a tender, new feeling comes for her new-found uncle. His grave, almost beautiful face, with its locks of snowy hair, never leaves her memory; and somehow a sense of protection and comfort surrounds it, such as she has never felt before. The thought of leaving Wentworth and Miss Lotway brings no pain now, and the vision of life with her uncle rises pleasantly.

Only one thing troubles her.

"If," she thinks to herself, as a delicious waltz steals to her ears from the house near, "if Jack would only let me tell someone I should feel happier; it is such a heavy secret to bear alone. I think Uncle Reginald would comfort me. I seem as if I could pour out everything to him without fear. Would he be angry? Perhaps he would blame Miss Lotway. No. I would never permit that; if wrong has been done, I alone have done it. Yet, surely, to love Jack as I do can be no sin; anyone who knows him would agree to that."

She sits on for awhile longer, and then glides from the window in her white dressing-gown, and sinks on her knees by the bed. "Oh, heaven," she prays, "grant us forgiveness if we have sinned; and grant that nothing shall come to part our love—if it be Thy will!"

CHAPTER V.

While Sadie is making her simple morning toilette, feeling both mentally and bodily refreshed, and stimulated by the golden sunshine, Jack Ronalds is reading the letter she wrote before seeking her rest.

She had approached the subject of her uncle's wish that she should stay with him altogether, a little timidly thinking in her sweet tenderness that the notion might perhaps wound her husband.

"I feel," she had written, "that I have veered round suddenly about my new-found uncle. But, oh! Jack, my darling! I am sure when you see him, you will understand. There is something about him that seems to draw my heart to him. He is a cripple, Jack! quite deformed. As yet I have not heard whether this is the result of an accident, but I guess so, for his head is a grand one, his face noble, with its traces of suffering. He has made no mention of my parents, Jack. I do not know even if he be my father's or my mother's brother, but there is some reason for his silence, I imagine, dear, and I shall learn all in due season. Somehow my impatience and curiosity have fled. I am content to wait till he can bring himself to speak of my childhood. He wants me to stay with him, and—I pray, my darling, I have not done wrong, and that you will thoroughly understand me—I promised to do so. I feel that I have a duty in waiting on my one and only known relative until—well, until that happy moment comes—the moment I long for as a flower longs for sun and dew—when we need conceal nothing, and I may own you before all the world as my own dear love!"

And then followed a few sweet, half-shy words, and the letter ended.

Jack Ronalds reads it through eagerly, and smiles contentedly as he does so.

"Nothing could be better," he muses. "I thought perhaps the ridiculous idea of duty might crop up in Sadie's mind, but I never anticipated her falling so easily under the supposed enthrallment of Derwent's presence. By Jove! I never experienced anything of the sort. He was always to me about the biggest bear one could meet outside the Zoological Gardens. Well, there is no accounting for tastes, or for women either. I must write a letter back to her, and give my hearty consent. Ah! Sir Reginald Derwent, you will live to regret your insolence to me, or my name is not what it is."

He carelessly tears Sadie's letter into pieces (while she pictures it hidden near his heart), then, tossing the pieces into the fireplace, sets a lighted match to them till a few smouldering ashes are all that remain.

"Yes," muses Ronalds, leaning his back against the mantel-board and continuing his reflections; "all goes well. I must give them a little time just to see if Sadie gets any information and entwines herself in the old man's affections, which she is sure to do. And then for my final coup, my interview with Sir Reginald, and my terms." He shifts from his leaning position and stands upright, while a cloud creeps over his face.

"What if Phil's suggestion should come off, and Derwent refuses to deal with me, and cuts off Sadie?"

He glances down at his well-varnished boots, a trifle smart for a college tutor, and apparently derives much comfort from the occupation, for his face clears, and he stretches out his hand for a cigar and match.

"Well, then, my only plan is to see Cuthbert. I fancy I shall know how to deal with that gentleman. I can frighten him into pro-

misgiving and performing anything if I get him to myself; and Phil must help me to that. Make the young cub produce the forged bill. See it carefully destroyed, and then—then defy Sir Reginald openly, and do all in my power to annoy and disgrace him. I flatter myself I shall be able to do it."

He smiles in a disagreeable fashion, takes one or two leisurely puffs at his cigar, and then frowns as he knocks off some ash.

"All the same, it will be a deuced sell if Derwent does not take the bait, and I shall have hampered myself for life with the girl who threatens, at this early stage, to develop into a sentimental bore. I was a fool to marry her! Phil was quite right, though he was thinking more of her than of me when he said an engagement would have been just as good."

He smokes on moodily, till a bell ringing in the corridor recalls him to the daily task before him.

With many an oath Jack Ronalds flings away his half-finished fragrant weed, dons his gown and cap, and prepares to descend to the chapel for morning prayers.

"Yet," his thoughts run as he passes down the stairs, "a legal ceremony has its advantages; in any case, Sir Reginald will most probably leave Sadie a portion, if not all his wealth; and who has so strong a right to look after her money as Sadie's husband?"

Comforted by this thought, he puts on his usual calm expression, strides into his place at chapel, and kneels throughout the prayers with as devout a mien as good old Dr. Bray, who is reading them.

Meanwhile, away at the Langham, Sadie is dressed in her spotless pink cotton gown, and, looking like a veritable flower, goes in search of her uncle's apartments.

The sitting-room is empty when she enters, but the table is laid for one person.

While she is standing at the window wondering if she ought to go back to her own domain again, Holroyd enters.

He responds to her feelings respectfully, and she sees in an instant that something is troubling him.

"Am I to breakfast here, Holroyd?" she asks.

"If you please, miss, Sir Reginald never gets up so early; and I'm sorry to say, seems very poorly this morning."

Sadie feels a thrill of self-reproach.

"I was wrong to keep him up so late, Holroyd. I should have remembered he is an invalid; but I was talking about my school life, and I forgot everything."

Holroyd looks at her gently, and shakes his head.

"It weren't that, Miss Sadie; it were the excitement of seeing you. He ain't strong, miss. But I've seen him like this many times. Don't you be frightened, and don't you blame yourself neither, because that will be wrong. I know what a pleasure it was to my poor master to hear your fresh, sweet voice!"

"Can I go to him?" Sadie asks, anxiously.

"Yes, when you have eaten some breakfast."

She sits obediently as Holroyd draws up a chair for her, and waits punctiliously on her.

"I want you to tell me, please, Holroyd, just what you think my uncle would like me to do. I am going to stay with him for some time, and, of course, I am strange to him. Now, will you just give me a sign if you think I am bothering him too much?"

Holroyd smiles faintly, his eyes rest on the girl's lovely face with a gaze of intense affection.

"I'll answer for it, Miss Sadie. You won't bother Sir Reginald."

"I want to do all in my power for him," Sadie goes on, almost dreamily; "he looks as if he had struggled so long with pain. I know he has suffered, Holroyd, though I have never heard anything of him before in all my life; yet I can read his face—it is a noble one. I am sure I shall love him, Holroyd!"

She speaks involuntarily; her mind goes back to her first impression of her uncle, and unconsciously urges her to say this.

Holroyd has gone to the window, apparently to arrange the curtains; his voice sounds husky and undecided as he answers,—

"Pray Heaven you may, Miss Sadie, for my master has had little happiness in his life!"

"Then I shall do all I can to bring him some."

Sadie cries this lightly, and then she is silent; her maid has just brought in some letters, and the very top one is for herself in Jack's handwriting. She takes it quietly, yet her fingers tremble.

Somehow since the news of her uncle's existence has come, her secret has grown more weighty and more terrible; before she was, so she imagined, alone in the world save for Miss Lotway, but now she is claimed, a vista of a life, in which love predominates, has been suddenly opened before her, and she shrinks from it.

What is she but a hypocrite—an imposter?

Truly her pure nature is tortured by the memory of her weakness and deceit. It is gradually rising to gigantic proportions, casting a cloud over the brightness of day, and plunging her at times into the black darkness of night's despair.

"Oh, to be able to ease my mind to someone!" is the cry of her heart. "If only I could clear myself, I should grow happy again!"

Holroyd takes Sir Reginald's letter into his master's room, and Sadie, her appetite gone, leans back in her chair to think for the hundredth time—to magnify her own share, to make Jack appear noble in her eyes.

She does not open his letter. A wave of self-disgust is passing through her; a wish, passionate as it is short-lived, comes,—

"Oh, that I had never met you, Jack!" followed by self-accusations.

She does not spare herself, though again and again her own innate goodness, truthfulness, and honour, make her wince when his selfishness and weakness will come, try as she may to push them from her memory.

It is Sadie's first secret, her first wrong, and it is growing almost more than she can bear.

Men can endure these things better than women. At all times a true woman struggles bravely under such a secret; her worldly wisdom may help her, her years' experience bring her comfort, but to a girl carefully nurtured, tended like a child, to be suddenly hurled face to face with a burden so heavy, so responsible, as a secret marriage, the mental battle that follows cannot be less than torture.

At least, it is so to Sadie; she suffers not from fear of wrath when all is discovered, but from a knowledge that she has acted against honour, conscience, and principles, and this knowledge brings acute pain. Jack was her hero in those first early days of their meeting and growing love; and much though she wish it, he is so no longer, for a hero must not tempt to deceit, to lies, to dishonour, and Jack has done all this, and yet—strange perversity of human nature—Sadie loves him none the less; indeed, as a salve to the faults she cannot shut her eyes to, she loves him the more, with a touch of that tender, protecting, semi-maternal love that lives in the heart of every woman if she be a true one.

Holroyd coming back wakes her from her reflections.

"Sir Reginald will be glad to see you, Miss Sadie, when you have finished your breakfast!"

"I have finished," Sadie answers, and as she rises she slips her unopened letter into her pocket: "is this the way?"

Holroyd opens the door, and as she passes in a wave of doubt and pain comes into his face.

"Was my first thought right?" thinks the man; "and has she some trouble of her

own? She was as bonny as a flower just a few moments ago, and now her appetite is gone, and there is a look in her eyes that makes one pity her."

Sadie enters her uncle's bedroom; he is not up, and she is shocked to see how weak and wan he seems; his face to-day has a grey, drawn look, and his hands lie helpless and heavy on the quilt.

Sir Reginald opens his eyes as the girl steals quietly in.

"Ah, my dearest, there you are!" he says, in tones that are weak but inexpressibly tender; "and how did you rest, eh?"

Sadie clasps his hand in hers, and kneels by the bed.

"I have made you ill, Uncle Reginald," she murmurs, involuntarily; "I upset you!"

He shakes his head, and a faint smile plays on his lips.

"You have done me good, my darling! Holroyd will tell you I am often like this. Ah! Sadie, you have found me too late, my child. I am a useless, burdensome wreck!"

Sadie nestles her lovely head on the quilt by his; there is a tone of such utter regret and sadness in his voice as brings tears of sympathy to her eyes.

"Don't say that, Uncle Reginald; you must try and remember I have found you at last, and that I am going to try and make you well!"

The sick man caresses her dark, curly locks softly.

"If anyone could do that it would be you, my child," he says, after a pause; "but I doubt if I am right to keep you. It will be a lonesome life for you; and see, here is a letter from Miss Lotway, beseeching me to let you go back to her for a time."

Sadie reads through the old-fashioned letter, and then puts it down.

"I shall write and tell her I have decided to remain," she says. "I can go and see her some time or other; can't I, Uncle Reginald?"

He just nods his head, and then, after passing his handkerchief over his brow, from which the white locks are tossed back, he says,—

"And you are content to accept me and to love me, Sadie, knowing nothing of me?"

"Yes," she answers at once.

His hold tightens for an instant on her small hand, then he smiles very faintly.

"You are no woman, Sadie, for you possess no curiosity. You ask me no questions, nor do you seek to learn your past."

"I have lived so long in ignorance, I can live longer," is Sadie's reply, given generously, though she longs to hear of her parents—of her dead mother; yet she would put aside her own wishes, when to have them gratified would mean pain to another.

Sir Reginald looks at her fixedly for an instant.

"Kiss me!" he says at last.

Sadie rises, and puts her fresh young lips to his brow.

"Now you must go out for a while," her uncle continues. "Holroyd will order the carriage, and your maid can accompany you. This bright morning is too good to be wasted, and here is some money. Shop windows are tempting to young eyes. Buy what you like!"

Sadie takes the ten-pound note he holds out.

"I shall never spend this in a year!" she cries, and Sir Reginald smiles at the perplexed air that gathers on her face.

"A week in town will show you the way," he observes, a trifle drily. "Spending money is a woman's prerogative, Sadie, my dear!"

"Then you are quite right, Uncle Reginald. I am no true woman, for it seems I am wanting in every attribute that goes to make one."

Sir Reginald shakes his head on his pillows.

"For which the saints be praised!" is his answer, given in the same fashion as his last. Then his tone changes. "Go, my dear! put on your hat, and enjoy the sunshine while you may."

"Can I not read to you for a little first?" she asks.

He shakes his head.

"My doctors are coming this morning! But this afternoon, perhaps, I shall be glad for an hour. By the way, Sadie, I expect an old friend to dine with us this evening. I want you to cultivate his acquaintance, my child!"

"Of course, Uncle Reginald!" she answers. And then as Holroyd comes in and receives his master's order about the carriage, she goes to her own room.

It is not till her broad-brimmed is on that Sadie opens her husband's letter.

It is short, and contains only a few tender, loving sentences, which Jack Ronalds knows so well how to employ, and which act just as he intended them to. All her feelings of disgust and remorse vanish before the passionate wealth of love contained in the short note. Sadie is a woman, after all, and her love-dream is so beautiful she goes back easily to its enthrallments. She forgets Jack's weakness and faults; she only sees him as her handsome lover pleading for a kind look, a sweet word, and she yields to the picture her imagination conjures up as easily as she yielded to his ardent protestations a few months back.

Sunshine reigns in her heart and dances in the street. Sadie rejoices in life as she is bowled with many through the crowded thoroughfares to the park filled with carriages, gaily-dressed people, and riders. It is a new sight to her, one that seems like a glimpse of fairyland, and she begins to comprehend the affection Jack has for London, if his experience of it has been anything like this.

She wonders slightly, as she bows away under the boughs of the trees, if it has been so, and feels that that is impossible; for has not Jack dwelt so often on his hardworked life, on the poverty of the surroundings, on the selfishness and sweetness of his mother and sister, who will welcome her so warmly on the day that their marriage is announced. Jack Ronalds did not lie. He does truly possess a mother and a sister; but they bear no resemblance to the tender patient woman whom he has sketched so often to his young wife till she knows them by heart, and has suffered many a qualm of conscience when she thinks that they, too, are being deceived. Little dreams Sadie, as she sits in the June sunshine, with a smile on her lips, and a lustrous look in her star-like eyes, of the lies that have been strewn in her path of love, that Jack's eyes and lips can utter sweetness while his selfish nature is wearied and bored to death; that the mother and sister are two hard, worldly women whom he has not seen for years, and does not care if he never sees again; and that her sacrifice, her self-reproaches, remorse, and mental suffering have been given in vain.

She lunches alone. Holroyd tells her Sir Reginald is resting, as he expects his lawyers and Mr. Niel Gwynne, the friend he spoke of before she went out. She goes to her room, and after writing a long letter to Miss Lotway, in which she sends messages to all her companions, and another one to Jack full of pleasure with her new-found relation, she takes a book, and sitting by the open window determines to stay till she is sent for.

CHAPTER VI.

Sir Reginald has been wheeled into the sitting-room for his interview with Mr. Brown, of the firm of Wright and Brown, solicitors, and very tired and feeble he looks when his business is concluded.

Holroyd, watching him carefully, and noting the pallor of his lips and the greyness of his face, puts some brandy into a glass, and gives it to him silently; then, with a movement of the hand, beckons Mr. Brown away.

"Dear me, Holroyd!" says the lawyer, cautiously, once outside the door. "Sir Reginald seems much weaker; quite broken up, indeed, one might say!"

"Yes, sir," Holroyd replies, quietly. "My master gets worse every day. The doctors shook their heads over him badly this morning; but he's got an iron will, has Sir Reginald, as you know right well, and it is something wonderful to watch how he forces himself through his weakness, sir!"

Mr. Brown nods his head.

"I expect the coming of Miss Saditha has tried him, Holroyd!"

"Maybe, sir; but it is a great joy to him to see her. And a sweet lovely young thing she is too, sir! Lord! how like her mother, to be sure! It gave me quite a turn when I see her first at the railway station!"

"Yes, yes!" agrees the lawyer, as he goes downstairs; "and she has asked no questions, Holroyd?"

"None! She ain't a common sort, full of inquisitive curiosity!"

Holroyd speaks loftily, and Mr. Brown smiles.

"She is a woman, though! Well, I must be off! Send me a wire the morning you start for the Manor. Good-day, Holroyd, good-day."

"She ain't no woman!" Holroyd says to himself. "She's an angel, like her mother was!"

The afternoon passes peacefully with Sadie. Her mind still is content, touched as it was by Jack's passionate love words, and she sits by the open window, sometimes reading, sometimes dreaming, till Mary comes to help her dress for dinner.

Her wardrobe is necessarily simple; but Miss Lotway's old-fashioned choice of dresses are not the least becoming garments Sadie could have selected, and it happens that her "breaking-up party dress" had been sent home from Upper Wentworth only the day before she started, so, in deference to her uncle's guest, she elects to don it. It is a soft white silk, made perfectly plain, with folds of lace across the bust showing her delicate throat, and finished round the waist by a broad sash of soft silk.

Sadie has not great quantities of hair, but it clusters in thick, glossy curls, and falls into picturesque waves, fix it how she may. To suit the quaintness of her gown she piles it high on her lovely head, while little, soft tendrils cling round her neck in baby fashion.

Sadie knows she is pretty, though it was a fact that had troubled her little till Jack came, and then an intuition mingled with her childish delight that her beauty would be a power to her some day, and she must guard it.

Mary is enraptured with her young mistress, and Sadie takes a last peep at her reflection as Holroyd taps at the door, and announces dinner is served.

She fits into the dining room a veritable white flower, her dainty little feet being encased in shoes that match the spotless hue of her gown, and then comes to a standstill.

Her uncle is not there, but standing with his head resting on the mantel-shelf is a tall, well-formed young man, with close-cropped, dark brown hair, and a short, pointed beard.

"Oh!" murmurs Sadie, taken by surprise.

"I beg your pardon!" he says, quickly, his eyes rivetted upon the pretty picture of the girl in her white garments framed in the doorway.

"I did not hear you come in. As Sir Reginald is not present, may I introduce myself? I am Niel Gwynne, at your service. You, I think, are Miss Lancaster, my dear old friend's niece?"

"Yes," Sadie answers, with a faint wave of colour in her cheeks, "I am his niece."

She will not utter the lie and say, "I am Miss Lancaster."

She takes the hand Mr. Gwynne has frankly stretched out to her, and thinks in one moment how tall and manly he looks.

"Your uncle has gone to deck himself in another coat; he would do so, though I protested warmly against him taking so much exertion, and wish now I had not donned my evening dress. I should have remembered

how punctilious Sir Reginald Derwent always is.

"Still protesting, Niel," asks Sir Reginald, now being wheeled by Holroyd from his bedroom.

He looks wonderfully handsome in a black velvet coat, showing a white shirt and tie. His face has grown less pale, and his eyes glow with a fire that seems to mock his helpless condition. A shawl drawn over his legs hides the maimed limbs that used to bear his tall form so proudly.

Sir Reginald's lips tremble a little as he sees Sadie. Only Holroyd notices it. His manner is more tender than usual as he puts his master near the table.

"You have made friends, then?" Sir Reginald says, looking from Gwynne to Sadie.

"Yes," Niel Gwynne replies, thinking that till now he had never realised how beautiful a girl could be.

"Are you better, Uncle Reginald?" Sadie whispers, just bending over him.

"Much better, my darling!" he answers, and smiles up into her face. Then, as Sadie seats herself at the table, he continues: "It will be my own fault if I do not improve now—eh, Niel, with such a gentle little nurse?"

"Most certainly it will," Mr. Gwynne answers, gravely. Then at his host's request he takes the head of the table, with the duties of carver.

The conversation waxes most lively and pleasant. Sadie, losing her shyness, is led on to give her experience of her first drive in Hyde Park, and is compelled to confess she bought nothing after all. And after that she is content to listen, as her uncle and his guest get into an ardent political argument. Sir Reginald holds strong views, and Mr. Gwynne is slightly antagonistic. It crosses Sadie's mind that the younger man lays himself open to be attacked and routed by the older on purpose that his host shall enjoy a triumph. And she feels a certain liking for Mr. Gwynne, as she credits him with this kindness.

Then the topic changes, and people are discussed instead of politics. Sadie wonders at the change that comes over Sir Reginald. A perpetual sneer is on his lips, and curt, polished sentences of disbelief and doubt are uttered, regardless whether the person spoken of be man or woman. She does not know exactly why, but this change in her uncle, who is so sweet and tender to her, pains Sadie. The contemptuous tones of his voice and the remorseless attack on human weakness, sent a faint thrill of dread through her heart.

Niel Gwynne sees something of this in the girl's face, and with inimitable tact and good humour he tries to introduce fresh subjects for conversation. For a time he is successful. He starts on art, and Sadie can discuss this with him, loving the very name most fervently. Sir Reginald does not join in at first; he seems content to listen and to watch the young people. His eyes, indeed, rarely leave Sadie's lovely animated face; but she is unconscious of his earnest gaze, being deep in an argument, and gradually waxing wrathful with Mr. Gwynne, who professes to call Wagner a humbug.

Sadie stands up valiantly for the great master, and is not aware that, though Mr. Gwynne's remarks are given with annoying calmness, his eyes are twinkling with amusement.

"Well, at any rate, you can never entrust your Wagner to any but the most skilled artists," sums up Niel Gwynne, after listening to a long panegyric from the girl.

"We performed some of 'Lohengrin' most successfully at Wentworth's schoolhouse last Christmas," she retorts.

"How glad I am I was nowhere near!"

Sadie is obliged to laugh at the genuine satisfaction conveyed in those words, and Sir Reginald joins her.

"Never mind, Sadie! He must be punished for that, and I will tell you what you shall do. Inaugurate a splendid amateur Wagnerian entertainment, and insist on Gwynne

taking part in it, as soon as we get down to Derwent Manor."

Sadie looks round quickly. It is the first mention of anything connected with her new life that has come yet, and it strikes peculiarly but not unpleasantly on her ear.

"That decides me. I shall not venture to Derwent Manor," Mr. Gwynne observes, quietly.

Sadie laughs.

"I believe you sing well," she says, just looking at him. "I have a good mind to put you to the test, and cast you for a heavy part!"

"I throw myself on your mercy," the young man replies. He is glad to carry on this conversation, for Sir Reginald's face has never worn so contented an air since he has known him. The light badinage is good for the invalid.

"That is unwise," returns Sadie, gravely. "Women are proverbially treacherous, aren't they, Uncle Reginald?"

"I leave you and Gwynne to fight your battle out," the sick man says, smiling tenderly at her bright, lovely face.

"Well!" Mr. Gwynne settles, stroking his short, silky beard; "I will submit. But I warn you, Miss Lancaster! You will regret it, not once, but always, if you give me a part in your Wagnerian festival. I have only done so once before in my life. Perform in public, I mean, and that was at Oxford. We got up an entertainment for some charity. I forget what now, and a lot of our fellows joined. I was a miserable failure, but several of the others came out with flying colours, particularly a man called Gerald Musgrave—such a handsome boy, with a voice like a woman's or an angel's, which is the same thing. We always used to tell Musgrave he ought to go on the operatic stage; he would make his fortune, he—"

Sir Reginald has grown very pale, his hands are clenched on either arm of his chair. He breaks in here, his voice sounding curiously strange and harsh.

"Is that—man—a friend of yours, Niel?"

Gwynne looks round surprised, not only at the words, but at the tone.

"I have seen nothing of him from that time to this," he answers, hurriedly, "but I have heard a good deal, and not altogether to his credit. I was rather surprised at it all."

Sir Reginald nods his head in a jerky manner.

"I, too, have heard, but I was not surprised. What could a Musgrave be but a villain, and this boy fulfilled his promise. Beware of him, Niel," he goes on, in a low, passionate way. "Shun him if he comes in your path, for he will harm you. Black, sinful blood runs in his veins. He is the son of a villain—and a true son, worthy of his sire."

Sadie rises half frightened from her chair, and sinks into it again really terrified as the uncle turns to her, saying, in the same strange way:

"And you, too, my child, be warned. If ever you hear the name of Musgrave beware. Trust it not, or you will rue it to your dying day. It is a name that has blackened your young—li—"

The words die away in a choking, gasping sob. A sort of mist crowds before Sadie's frightened eyes, and when it clears she sees Niel Gwynne and Holroyd wheeling her uncle's insensible form, his face lying death-like on his pillow, from the room.

At the bedroom door Holroyd turns.

"Leave him to me, sir," he says, hurriedly.

"I have often seen Sir Reginald like this, and I know best what to do for him."

"Holroyd, what is it? Can't we do anything for him?"

It is Sadie who speaks, one white hand grasping a chair for support—it has all come so suddenly. She felt a moment before quite happy, glancing ever and again at her uncle's face, wearing its pleased smile, and now, in one instant that has ended, and as yet she can scarcely realise how.

"Go to Miss Sadie, sir," whispers Holroyd to Mr. Gwynne, "she will be frightened. I must send round to Harley Street at once for the doctor. I don't know why, but I feared to-day would not end well."

"If I had only known," Gwynne answers, looking really miserable, "I would not have mentioned Musgrave's name. That seems to have upset him."

Holroyd, busily employed in trying to bring some flicker of consciousness to the poor white face, lifts his own to Niel Gwynne.

"That name, sir, has been the serpent that stung all the happiness out of my master's life years ago."

Gwynne says nothing, but as the servant begs him once more to return to Sadie he goes.

"Oh! what is it, Mr. Gwynne?" she cries, hurriedly. "Is he very ill?"

"Holroyd seems to think that the day has exhausted Sir Reginald. It has been very hot, and he has had some excitement in your coming."

"Yes, I understand that, but he was all right till you mentioned your friend's name."

"I never heard Musgrave spoken of in connection with Sir Reginald," Gwynne says, gazing at the girl's pale, troubled, yet lovely face, "or, believe me, I should have been most careful. But don't be alarmed, Miss Lancaster. Unfortunately, your uncle is frequently like this."

"Have you seen him faint before?" she asks, lifting her wondrous grey eyes to him. "It seems terrible; it looks like death!"

Gwynne smiles reassuringly. Unconsciously he feels a wave of tenderness mingle with his sympathy for Sadie's distress.

"I have seen Sir Reginald faint many times, I regret to say," he replies, his face becoming grave again, "and I have known him well now for the last six years."

"And I have only known him one day."

Sadie's voice has a ring of sadness in it. One short day only has she realised the pleasure of having a being who claimed her in some way—to whom she has the right to turn—and in those short four-and-twenty hours the pleasure has been fast growing into happiness.

"I trust there will be many long years before you both be together," Gwynne says, gently.

It has been a great surprise to him to find the girl here to-night. Like the rest of the world he had always thought Sir Reginald Derwent a lonely, wealthy man, with no one belonging to him from whom he could expect attention and affection, and dependent upon his trusted servant for all care.

Sadie's presence had been communicated to him abruptly just before dinner was served, but he had been by no means prepared to see the fresh beautiful girl thus strangely introduced to his knowledge.

Sadie sighs. All her good spirits have vanished. She feels once more the restless self-reproach and misery she endured in the early morning, added to an indescribable pain and fear when she thinks of her uncle.

She is silent for a time, gazing out into the summer evening, seeing the street with its carriages and faintly twinkling lamps as in a dream, while Gwynne paces slowly up and down the room.

Suddenly she remembers him, and turns with a fleeting blush at her forgetfulness.

"Please forgive me, Mr. Gwynne; would you not like to go now? I daresay you had some appointment, and I am afraid Uncle Reginald will scarcely be well enough to come back again."

"I think I will wait with your permission, and hear the doctor's report," Niel Gwynne answers; "I fancy he came a few minutes back."

Sadie gives a slight start and comes from the window, where the fast-growing twilight has been folding her in its dim embrace.

"Of course," she says, in her low voice, "I hope you did not think me rude for suggesting you should go, Mr. Gwynne?"

"I can answer that most safely, Miss Lancaster."

They lapse into silence again, which lasts till the inner door is opened, and Holroyd comes in.

"Dr. Parker heard you were here, Mr. Gwynne, and he would like to speak to you. He is just outside."

Gwynne's brow contracts, but the dusk hides this outward sign of inward disturbance.

"Will you excuse me, Miss Lancaster? I have an appointment fixed with Dr. Parker for this morning which I could not keep."

He hurries from the room. Lies don't come easy to Niel Gwynne, but he somehow grasps that Sadie is of a highly-nervous temperament, and the wish of the doctor to see him bodes no good news.

The doctor and he grasp hands silently. "I am glad you are here, Gwynne. Poor old Derwent; it is the end at last," says the medical man.

Gwynne makes some slight, unintelligible exclamation.

"For the last month his heart has been sinking daily. I warned him of excitement. Holroyd tells me he sent for some niece of his to be with him, and from my examination just now I should say if her coming was an excitement it has hastened the end. It is just possible, of course, that it was not; at any rate, something has occurred to try the heart, and it is so weakened by years of suffering that it must give way altogether in the next few hours. I sent for you to ask you as you have been so intimate with him of late whether you know any other of his relations. They should be telegraphed for at once."

"I am totally ignorant on the subject," Niel says, quietly; in fact, this young girl's appearance and existence was a surprise to me. Holroyd will know probably."

"I have asked him, but he appears so overwhelmed with the news I was obliged to give him—he can do nothing. I must go now, but I will return in an hour or so. See that he is kept quiet, Gwynne."

As Niel goes back to the dining-room Holroyd speaks from the inner doorway.

"Miss Sadie, my master wishes to see you." Gwynne goes to him hurriedly.

"Is it wise, Holroyd? Ought not Sir Reginald to be kept quiet? He wants rest."

"It is wise, sir," Holroyd answers in husky, yet decided tones; "my master will be glad also, sir, if you will kindly wait here. He wants to see you; he will keep you only a few minutes, sir."

Sadie moves slowly forward; a dim prescience is on her. She cannot describe what her feelings are; she only knows she is wanted, and her heart thrills accordingly.

A faint light is burning in the bedroom; by it she can just discern that pale, worn face resting on the pillow. The night has grown sultry, the window is thrown wide open, and the sound of an organ from the church near swells softly on the evening air.

She creeps close to the bed in her clinging white garments, her countenance grown as pure as they, and Sir Reginald's heavy eyelids are lifted.

There is a moment's silence—a contraction of pain across the eyes and brow; then a smile comes—a smile so sweet, so tender, so inexpressibly full of love, that a sob rises unbidden in the girl's throat.

Sir Reginald tries to stretch out a hand, but is too weak. She sees this, and nestling down on her knees, puts one of hers in his.

His pallid lips move, a faint sound comes from them.

"Sadie, my flower, my own! You have found me too late! I did it for the best!—forgive me, my child!"

She creeps close to him, an intuition has come to her heart.

The sick man gazes at her in a feeble, tender way.

"You understand, I see! Yes, dear, I am your father!"

"My father!"

Sadie's head droops till it rests on her hand, clasped in that worn one. A very tumult of pain, grief, pity and love surges in her breast. Sir Reginald releases his hand, and it strays over her soft curls.

Holroyd is near, and, bending, moistens his lips. The sick man glances up.

"Guard her, old friend!" he murmurs, and the servant nods his head, with tears rolling down his rugged cheeks.

Sadie does not move, and her father's hand still rests on her head.

"Niel, send him!" he murmurs, weakly, and in answer to a sign from Holroyd, Niel Gwynne stands by his side.

"Stoop down. I—cannot—"

The young man's face, grave and full of pity, bends to those pallid lips.

A whisper starts from them. Niel Gwynne starts slightly, a wave of colour dyes his face, and then, after one instant's pause, he answers,

"I promise!"

"I promise!"

There is a sigh from the dying man.

Sadie lifts herself suddenly; she seems awakened.

"Father!" she cries, putting her young arms round his form. "My own father! Look at me! Speak to me! Oh! don't leave me now, just when you have come! I want you, I want you, father!"

The white lids are lifted, a smile breaks for one instant over the sunken countenance.

"Heaven keep you always, my—"

There is another sigh. A movement of the lips, and then silence.

Sadie staggers to her feet; she seems as if she were choked. Holroyd is on his knees weeping, but Niel Gwynne strides forward, and as the girl's strength and senses mercifully vanish, holds her inanimate form in his arms, then carries her easily from the room.

Henceforth these two young lives so strangely met will mingle together, bound by a promise given to the heart of the dead.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2021. Back numbers can be obtained through any news-agent.)

BEAUTY CANNOT DIE.

Beauty is forever young,
While there speaks a poet's tongue.

Beauty never fades or dies

To the artist's seeing eyes.

While the sun shall rise and set,

While the moon and stars shine yet

Tranquil in the sky,

Beauty cannot die.

Love-light is the heart of God.

Beauty riseth from the sod.

By the orange groves and palms,

In the storms and in the calms,

In the sorrow round us spread,

In the joy that breaks ahead,

Sing it low and high,

Beauty cannot die.

Wedding robe and funeral bier,

What sweet mystery is here?

Birth of every little child,

Anguish of a mother wild,

Lilt of song birds in the air,

Burst of joy and fold of care,

Ever love is nigh.

Beauty cannot die.

Comfort ye, oh, comfort ye,

Man and woman, where they be.

While this spacious earth shall stand,

And the harvest bless the land,

While both cold and heat hold sway,

And the night succeeds the day,

This from God say I,

Beauty cannot die.

Society.

THE King will, according to the latest report, pay a visit to the Riviera in the spring, leaving town about the middle of March, in which case he will travel in the strictest incognito, and spend a few days in Paris on each journey.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales and their children will remain at Sandringham until Easter, when they expect to move into Marlborough House.

THE King has granted in the south-east wing of Kensington Palace apartments to his sister, Princess Henry of Battenberg, Governor of the Isle of Wight.

A CLOTH-OF-GOLD under-jacket will be worn by His Majesty King Edward VII. at the Coronation, on which will be embroidered palm-branches and the three national floral emblems of England, Ireland, and Scotland.

On the King's stole the Cross of St. George, the Royal crown, and the rose, shamrock, and thistle will be woven in gold thread. The King's cope, the most magnificent garment which will be worn, will be decorated with silver eagles and *fleur de lys* and roses; shamrocks and thistles will be worked in the general design. The *fleur de lys* has a special historical significance to the time when English kings were proclaimed rulers of France. The crown and the arrangement of the jewels will be especially designed for the occasion.

THE Queen, although so much stronger, has still very little appetite. Even when in robust health she takes little or no interest in the menu for the daily meals; only very occasionally she fancies a certain dish, which fancy is duly communicated to the chef. The King, on the contrary, is not only very particular as to what he eats himself, but is also very careful for his guests, and often asks a friend, whose judgment he can trust, "Was it all right?"

THERE is to be a great change in jewellery fashions, and for the Coronation a number of Society women are having their jewels reset. The tiara has grown taller and taller until it has reached a point of natural reaction, and now diamond bandeaux and flat wreaths of jewels are coming in, following the pretty fashion of last year in artificial flowers. This, after all, is only a revival. Among the jewellery made for Princess Charlotte of Wales on her marriage with Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg was a beautiful wreath for the hair, composed of rosebuds and leaves in large diamonds of the finest lustre, with large drop earrings to match. There was also a cactus of diamonds for the waist, of great value.

MISS KNOLLYS always acts as purse-bearer to the Queen and the Princesses on their various journeys and excursions, and sometimes amusing little contretemps have happened when she has not provided herself with the necessary funds. A few years ago, at the end of one of their cruises in the "Osborne," the Queen (then Princess of Wales), Princess Maud, and Princess Victoria, accompanied by Miss Knollys, passed through Lucerne on their way to Paris, having stopped there in strict incognito. One afternoon they all went to Hugenin's (the Rumpelmayer of Lucerne) to have chocolate and cakes, and also purchased a number to take away with them. But when it came to paying for it, "Chaity" (Miss Knollys) found that for once she had not enough with her to settle the account, and amid much laughter the sum was collected, each of the Princesses giving something from their own purses. But a large box of chocolates had to be left behind.

CONSOLATION.

Oh, woman, do not lose your wonted cheer
When three gray hairs upon your head appear;
A word of consolation I'll let fall—
Can they be counted, they don't count at all.

THE GOLDEN HOPE

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Lady Redwoode, the owner and undisputed proprietor of all the fair domain of Redwoode, has been left a widow a year or more previous to the opening of the story. Lord Redwoode left no heir, but expressed a wish that on the decease of his wife the estates should pass to their nephew, Andrew Forsythe, and never doubted Lady Redwoode's compliance with his wishes. Mr. Forsythe was musing over many things, and wondering what would happen to him should his aunt marry again. Judge then of his surprise when Lady Redwoode tells him the story of her early life. Secretly married when quite a girl, in order not to arouse the anger of her brother, with whom she was living in India, there came a day when it was necessary to tell all, and the scene that followed caused Lady Redwoode to fall into convulsions, and she lay ill for many weeks. On returning to life and consciousness, it was to find herself a widow and a mother.

Sir Richard Houghton, although but twenty-seven, has lost all joy in life through an unhappy marriage. News is brought to him that his divorced wife, Margaret Sorel, is dying, and the messenger eagerly begs an interview on the pretext that Margaret desires Sir Richard's forgiveness. Margaret fails to rekindle the old love, and swears that no other woman shall ever become his wife.

Now Lady Redwoode's brother is dead, and as an act of reparation has sent all the necessary proofs of her first marriage, but the secret of the identity of her own child dies with him. The two girls are coming to England, and it is for Lady Redwoode to discover which of the two is her daughter. After a little hesitation in coming to so momentous a decision, the choice falls on Cecile, who at once sets to work to ingratiate herself with Lady Redwoode at the expense of her foster-sister Hellice, and in this she is ably seconded by the Hindoo ayah. Cecile's relationship is proclaimed to the assembled household; and to Hellice, who watches this rejoicing without one pang of envy, there suddenly comes a feeling of loneliness, and she turns unobserved into the garden to seek comfort among the shade of the trees. It is thus that she discovers Sir Richard Houghton, who for one moment gazes on the lovely vision ere it is lost to view. "I must see her again," he says, "Whoever and whatever she is I recognise her as my fate."

CHAPTER XVII.

It needed only Hellice's complete restoration to health to establish her position at Redwoode as the adopted daughter of the Baroness and co-heiress with Cecile, but that recovery was scarcely so rapid as had been anticipated. The arrow sped by the cruel hand of Margaret Sorel rankled and festered in the heart of Hellice, and though she called to her aid her strong pride and exerted to the utmost her resolute will, she could not recover from the wound that had been dealt her. She had no longer any doubt, if indeed she had had any at all, of the truthfulness of the divorced wife's story. The last hope had fled when Lady Redwoode had so unconsciously confirmed the fact of a previous marriage upon the part of Sir Richard Houghton. But Hellice had not been able to conquer the love that had suddenly irradiated her life with the glow of heavenly sunshine. Instead of utterly condemning her betrothed, she pitied him with a yearning tenderness that made her heart ache.

From the circumstances that had thus come to her knowledge she drew what seemed to her a plausible explanation and a resolution.

She explained Sir Richard's pursuit of her by assuring herself that he had been married at an extremely early age, before he could have known his own requirements, and that he had deserted his bride under the plea of her unworthiness to bear his name. He had subsequently believed her dead, as also had Lady Redwoode, and thought himself free to marry again. He had not been aware of his wife's continued existence until he had encountered her under the disguise of a fortune-telling gipsy, and it was possible, Hellice strove to think, that he had not even recognised her then. There had been no evil in his heart when he had asked her to become his wife. He must have thought himself free at that moment, when carried away by love he had besought her to gladden and brighten his existence.

She could not believe that his grave blue eyes were the mirrors of an unworthy soul; that his deep, full voice, which had trembled

with earnestness and feeling, could have breathed words of love to her when he knew himself bound to another; that, in short, he was capable of trifling with her happiness or wronging her so much as by a thought. She did full justice to his noble qualities, and her heart grew faint and sick as she thought that henceforth he must be as a stranger to her.

For her resolution was never to see him again. She could not trust herself to speak to him the stern sentence of separation, and she deemed it wisest that the anguish of a farewell should be spared to both.

She kept the secret bravely in her own heart. Lady Redwoode never suspected its existence; Cecile was unconscious of it; and only the Hindoo ayah knew, or imagined, that Hellice's illness had sprung from another cause than a change of climate, or that her pillow was nightly wet with tears. Renee did not impart her suspicions to anyone, but it might have been noticed that her vigilance over her reputed grand-daughter became keener and more sustained, and that not even a sigh from the maiden escaped her knowledge. That her vigilance was not prompted by love need not be told.

The days came and went, and Hellice quitted her couch for a chair, and walked about her chamber unsupported. The deep red bloom that had of late been missing made fiful, capricious visits to her cheeks, and the scarlet of olden time had settled again upon her sensitive, exquisitely curv'd lips. The strength that had deserted her came steadily back to her young veins, and she moved once more with the willowy grace that added so greatly to her beauty. She was, in fact, almost well, and would have been able to resume her place in the household but for the nervous dread of meeting her lover.

She had seen him once or twice during her convalescence from the window of her chamber, and by the anguish that had come over her heart at sight of him she knew that he was dearer than ever to her. Not even the assurance to herself that he was the husband of another woman could stifle the wild tumultuous beating at her heart or subdue the swift blushes that surged in and out of her cheeks. But these brief glimpses had been the last, and Hellice no longer looked for him, no longer watched his going, and mentioned his name only in her prayers.

It must not be supposed that she became gloomy or selfish in her grief. Although a burden had been laid upon her that almost "pressed the life out of her young heart," a new happiness had come to strengthen and support her. From the day of making her will Lady Redwoode had divided her time almost equally between the two girls. Her manner was perhaps tenderer to Cecile, but it was almost motherly to Hellice. The singular loveliness and grace of the dark-haired girl had won a hold upon her heart that she could not shake off. At times she completely forgot Cecile's aspersions of her cousin, and with unveiled vision recognised Hellice's truthfulness, purity, and innocence, and felt towards her a wild, passionate yearning such as Cecile had never awakened, and such as Cecile had no power to still.

Sir Richard Houghton still sent gifts of flowers to his betrothed, but his notes were uniformly returned unopened. He called at Redwoode every day with unvarying punctuality, and as each day Hellice refused to see him he began to feel assured of the gulf that had been opened between them, and to see in it the work of Margaret Sorel. He at length came to the resolution of imparting his fears to Lady Redwoode, and of imploring her intercession with Hellice.

Before that intercession could be made, however, events transpired which so widened

the gulf that it became almost, if not quite, unbridgable.

He left Redwoode one afternoon resolved that on his next visit, upon the following morning, he would demand an interview with his betrothed, of whose almost complete recovery he had been informed, and in the event of a refusal he would solicit the friendly aid of the Baroness. He had scarcely departed when Lady Redwoode, leaving Cecile and Andrew Forsythe to themselves, made her way to the tower-chamber.

Hellice welcomed her with a bright, glad smile.

The maiden was seated in an easy chair, completely dressed for the first time since her illness. A warm-hued robe fell about her slender figure in soft, thick folds; a lace frill encircled her white throat, and others shaded her wrists; a bright scarlet ribbon was wound in and out among the waves of her dusky hair. There was a languor about her that testified to her recent indisposition, but her face was all warmth, light, and colour.

The ayah was standing near, regarding her with strange intentness. At the entrance of the Baroness she started guiltily and moved back a few steps into the shadow of the wall, folded her hands, standing like a statue, and with a countenance as blank of expression as an untouched block of marble.

"You are looking well again," said Lady Redwoode, kissing the upturned brow, and looking smilingly into the sweet, shining eyes. "I am glad to see you so nearly recovered. Were you dressed to go downstairs?"

Hellice replied in the affirmative.

"I wish I had known you were so well," said her ladyship, smiling. "Here I have been obliged to cheer and entertain an unhappy, desponding lover, when one glimpse of you would have enraptured him. My dear Hellice, I fear your ideas of maidenly delicacy are carried too far. Sir Richard longs to see you."

She paused, warned by the sudden paleness that came over the girl's face, depriving it of the vivid colouring that had brightened it a moment before.

"You know your own affairs best, my dear," said Lady Redwoode, after a brief silence. "Do as you think proper with regard to Sir Richard, for I know you love him as he deserves. You shall see him to-morrow, if you will, but to-day you belong to me. Mr. Kenneth is anxious to see you; Andrew brightened at the mention of your name; and Cecile—my sweet, loving Cecile—grieves continually at your long imprisonment. I want to introduce you to the family as my adopted daughter. Are you quite well enough for a little excitement?"

"Quite well enough," assented Hellice, smiling with pleasure at the interest exhibited in her. "I am going down to dinner to-day."

"We will go down now," said the Baroness, offering her arm for the support of the maiden. "Renee, put Miss Glinwick's shawl around her. She is too delicate yet to risk catching cold."

The ayah obeyed, in a listless, indifferent sort of way, her long earrings clinking as she stooped her tall figure, and her mouth curving itself into a scornful smile as she noticed how very slender Hellice's form had grown. In her own mind she was instituting comparisons between the cousins, and her verdict was given in favour of the tall, blonde Cecile.

Hellice took her ladyship's proffered arm, and they slowly quitted the tower, making their way down to the Oriental boudoir, where warmth, light, perfume, and sunshine conspired to form a bower of fairy-like beauty. Here, in a deep chair, nestled amidst soft cushions, Hellice half reclined, looking up with a wistful, grateful smile that touched the heart of her relative.

"I will bring in your visitors one at a time," said Lady Redwoode, when the maiden had signified her wish to see the members of the family. "Of course you will see Cecile first!"

Hellice assented, and the Baroness summoned her daughter to the boudoir. Cecile came in with a joyous expression, and Lady Redwoode drew her towards the chair, and said:—

"My daughter, I have adopted your cousin as your sister, and made her my heiress equally with you. I want you to be sisters in truth as you have long been in name. Let all misunderstanding between you die out this moment. Shall it not be so?"

A shadow, or, rather, a deep, dark cloud, passed over Cecile's assumed brightness at this announcement. A sense of keen and bitter disappointment gave a malignant expression to her blue eyes as she fixed their gaze upon Hellice, and the invalid involuntarily shuddered and drew back. Lady Redwoode had seen nothing but Hellice's movement of repugnance, and she said, in a tone of gentle reproof:—

"Hellice, if Cecile be willing to forgive your past coldness, can you not be friends with her?"

Hellice's lips quivered, and a look of pain convulsed her face. Apparently not noticing her emotion, Cecile stooped and kissed her with pretended affection, and exclaimed:—

"I am so glad, cousin Hellice, that mamma has adopted you. It is what I most wished. And I know you are glad," she added, with assumed artlessness, "for you have often said that there is nothing in the world you would not do to be rich. Let me congratulate you on the success of your plans, cousin."

An indignant denial of Cecile's assertion trembled on Hellice's lips. She looked at her cousin with stormy eyes, heightening colour, and a manner full of proud anger, but she did not speak.

The storm of words was stayed on her lips by the reflection that she could not betray the daughter's falsehood to the loving, trusting mother, and that she could never vindicate herself at her cousin's expense.

Alas! that circumstances occurred to give a sinister significance to her noble silence! Alas! that that silence should have afterwards been brought forward in an accusation against her!

With no prophetic foreboding that it would tell against her at some future period, Hellice had preserved her own counsel, as Cecile had expected she would. She turned, however, with aversion from her cousin.

"My children," said the Baroness, looking from one to the other, her lovely Saxon face full of pain and uneasiness, "what does this mean? Hellice, you know that I have ceased to remember your father's harshness to me, and that I no longer connect you with any thoughts of him. You are growing very dear to me, and I fancied you loved me. Can you not love my child, the sharer of your early pleasures, your foster-sister?"

To this appeal Hellice responded only by coldly extending her hand to Cecile. She could not feign a love she did not feel, but she was willing to preserve the forms of friendship.

"I would be friends with her, mamma, if she would let me," cried Cecile, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "Hellice never liked me. She is angry because you chose me in preference to her. Oh, Hellice, why will you always treat me so cruelly? If it were not for mamma I should be all alone in the world."

And she burst into a torrent of sobs that came from a heart full of anger, vexation, and chagrin.

Lady Redwoode bent a look of strange sternness upon Hellice, and then took the pretty hypocrite in her arms and caressed her.

A look of keen anguish passed swiftly over the face of Hellice, and she suppressed by an effort the grieving cry that arose to her lips. It seemed to her at that moment as if a pitiless fate were working against her, as if a bright had fallen upon both her lovers—that

for her lover and that for this proud and beautiful Lady Redwoode.

But her sorrowful look gave place to a smile of contempt as her eyes rested upon the sobbing Cecile, for she knew how false was all that show of emotion, and how hollow was the heart that the Baroness deemed so tender.

Lady Redwoode noted that contemptuous curl of Hellice's lip; her sternness increased, and her manner became involuntarily cold and constrained.

She soothed Cecile tenderly, and the fair blonde consented to dry her tears, and to manifest a forgiveness which annoyed the truthful and high-spirited Hellice beyond measure.

The Baroness made no further effort to bridge over the gap between the cousins. In her own mind doubts of Hellice began to work insidiously, and she accused herself of fickleness and other grave faults, but it did not occur to her to doubt Cecile.

With a grave, preoccupied manner, she summoned Mr. Kenneth and Andrew Forsythe to the boudoir, and they came in at once, her ladyship's nephew-in-law preceding the rosy-faced little lawyer.

Andrew Forsythe advanced at once to Hellice's chair and took in his little white hand that lay listlessly against a cushioned arm. He murmured words of congratulation for the maiden's recovery, and then gave way to Mr. Kenneth, whose delight at beholding Hellice illumined his round face and plump features and made him look for the moment like a tender, loving father.

"Bless you, my dear!" he said, taking her hand. "We have missed you sorely. Even Miss Cecile could not quite supply the vacant place. I am glad that Lady Redwoode has adopted you. Two such pretty, innocent creatures ought to be sisters and share alike. You must hasten and get back your strength, for we are going to have grand times at Redwoode. Merry-making, parties, junketings, picnics, and such sort of things."

The old man rattled on in this manner, his kindly eyes beaming with friendly light upon her, and Hellice's cheerfulness returned, and her happy spirit regained something of its former lightness.

Mr. Kenneth inaugurated a cheerful conversation, in which the invalid bore little part, and an hour glided away so pleasantly that its flight was unobserved.

At the end of that time the old lawyer withdrew in search of a pencil sketch which he had greatly prized and promised to Hellice, and soon after Cecile, with an aggrieved expression, and with a liberal display of her dainty lace handkerchief, retired to the drawing-room.

Andrew Forsythe was in the midst of a description of some agreeable resorts in the neighbourhood, and Lady Redwoode, believing that her absence would not be heeded, stole out to comfort the supposed grief of her child.

Hellice was thus left alone with Mr. Forsythe.

The schemer continued his descriptions, but his brain was busy with plans by which to improve his fortunes and to gratify at the same time the passion Hellice had awakened in his soul. He knew that she was not yet aware of Lady Redwoode's will, by virtue of which she had become an heiress, and he meant to use that ignorance to his own advantage. Her loveliness enchanted and intoxicated him. The warm breeze that entered at the open door swept past the maiden and wafted to him the fragrance of her perfumed hair. He looked with beaming eyes at her face with its wealth of delicate bloom, at her radiant eyes, and at her bright, sweet expression. It struck him that since her illness there hung about her a faint, intangible melancholy, rather to be felt than seen; a melancholy that reminded him of the perfume of a rose, for it was scarcely more perceptible and seemed to increase her beauty while not diminishing its brightness. It was like a sad minor strain

winding through a glad burst of harmony, adding to its brilliancy and effect.

The descriptions were finished, and still Lady Redwoode did not return. The conversation flagged, and Hellice became silent and thoughtful. A sudden impulse seized Mr. Forsythe to declare his love for her, and he acted upon it without giving himself time for consideration.

"You do not know how happy I am, Hellice," he said, in his soft, bland tones, that sounded sweetly in her ears, "in my aunt's adoption of you as her daughter. She is beginning to love you as you deserve and as much as if you had been her own child. She told me the day after you were taken ill that you had become engaged to Sir Richard Haughton. Shall I congratulate the Baronet on his good fortune?"

Hellice grew very pale, a piteous look came into her eyes, and her voice was low and broken as she answered,—

"I am not engaged to Sir Richard, Mr. Forsythe. The engagement is broken off."

Mr. Forsythe looked startled, and regarded her intently. He read in her sweet face traces of a recent struggle, and he came at once to the conclusion that her illness had resulted from the broken engagement. He knew that Sir Richard had not been the recreant lover, for the anxiety of the young Baronet concerning Hellice was well known to him, and he decided in his own mind that Hellice had become tired of her betrothed, or had heard something against him that had prompted her to dismiss him.

Following up the latter thought, he remembered the dramatic circumstances surrounding Sir Richard's boyish marriage, and concluded that they had in some way come to Hellice's knowledge, and that she had resented his secrecy in the matter as well as the bestowal of his first love upon another.

"I can hardly imagine that Sir Richard Haughton would have been so foolish as not to tell her," he thought, "especially as he might have known that she would hear of it. It can hardly be—yet I will find out."

He set himself to that task, conjointly with the one of furthering his own suit.

"Your engagement broken off!" he said, aloud. "I am sorry for Sir Richard, Miss Hellice. He suffered keenly in his first marriage, for his wife was greatly beneath him, and they did not live together. Happily for him, she died early!"

Hellice winced at this allusion, and by her manner Mr. Forsythe knew that he had probed her wound.

"Are you sure she died?" she asked, averting her face.

"Not sure, Miss Hellice, but it was so reported," answered Mr. Forsythe, upon whose mind her question had let in a flood of light. "No one knew her about here. She was an actress, very handsome, and older than Sir Richard. She may be living for aught I know; but he, I am sure, believes her to be dead!"

Hellice did not reply. Her face was in its expression as immovable as a statue, and her fingers lay on her knee like tapering strips of

Dean Farrar on Marriage

A charming article on this subject forms a delightful introduction to a handbook, entitled "Marriage, Weddings, and the Home," which is absolutely invaluable to all who are contemplating matrimony. This book will prove a very acceptable present to all engaged couples. A Purchaser at Nottingham says: "From a very cursory inspection I should imagine it to be a most useful book." It explains every point in regard to etiquette, offers suggestions as to where to spend the honeymoon, there is a chapter in regard to furnishing, etc., and the 16 which it costs is a marvellously good investment.—Send Stamp or Postal Order to-day to F.W. BEARS, 7, OMBONE CHAMBERS, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON.

marble, lifeless and listless. Andrew Forsythe began to comprehend her; his heart gave an exultant bound, and he gathered his faculties together to improve the opportunity which fate had granted him.

"Hellice," he said, gently, "I said I was sorry for Sir Richard. So I am, but I am more than glad for myself. Hellice, mine was the first friendly face that welcomed you to England and home. From the hour I first beheld you I loved you. Honour prevented me from declaring my love while you were bound to another; but now that you are free I may woo you for my wife. Hellice, beautiful Hellice, I love you!"

He bent over her eagerly, but no bright flush stained her cheeks at his avowal, no glad smile broke over her lips. She looked pained and bewildered, but did not reply in the negative. Encouraged by her silence, Mr. Forsythe continued:—

"Our marriage would be welcomed by Lady Redwoode, who loves me as if I were her son. My life would be devoted to you, Hellice. My highest aim would be to brighten your pathway through life and to shield you from all cares and troubles. I will be to you your slave, your adorer, your worshipper! I know not how to speak in courtly phrases, Hellice. Unlike Sir Richard, I have never wooed woman before. I am only a plain man with plain, blunt speech. Whatever I may say, it will all come back at last to the plain avowal—I love you! Without you I shall be a miserable, disappointed man! Smile on me, Hellice. Give me one word of hope for the future!"

He spoke impetuously, and with real warmth and ardour. Hellice read his sincerity, and it may be that she was for a moment gratified by his declaration, coming as it did at a time when she was not rich in friends. But there could be only one answer. With her, to love once was to love for ever, and she said, gently, yet distressfully:—

"Mr. Forsythe, I am pained by your words. It would be wrong for me to think of marriage with you when my heart belongs to another. I shall never marry—"

"So all young girls say!" interrupted Mr. Forsythe, betrayed into a momentary petulance.

"I say so, not as a young girl speaks from mere idleness," said Hellice, gravely, "but as a woman whose heart has been trampled on, and who has irrevocably decided upon her future. No, Mr. Forsythe, I respect you, but I cannot marry you. Let me be your sister, your friend, but we can be nothing nearer to each other!"

"But, Hellice," cried her lover, with passionate warmth, "you will recover from this early disappointment and look at love very differently. Few people marry their first loves. Sir Richard did not. You will not. Have pity on me. Let me prove by a long course of devotion how I love you. Give me but a straw of hope and I will wait for you for years, till we both are old and grey. Dear Hellice, do not wreck my life for a mere memory, for that is all Sir Richard will be to you!"

"Not all," returned Hellice, simply, and with strange mournfulness. "Mr. Forsythe, the image of Sir Richard has burned itself into my heart. Nothing can efface it. Throughout all the years of my life I shall be faithful to this early love. I should be unjust to you were I to marry you. Love is not a transitory passion—once really kindled in the heart it endures for ever!"

"Then Sir Richard still loves his actress-bride!"

Hellice looked startled at this application of her words, and bowed her head grievously. After a moment she raised it, and said:—

"I have been frank with you, Mr. Forsythe, because I deemed frankness due to you after your confession of love for me, and because I wish you to see how useless it is to hope that I may change my mind. I am going away from

Redwoode as soon as I have become quite well. I am an 'apple of discord' here," and she smiled mournfully.

"But, Hellice," persisted Mr. Forsythe, "I can give you independence and wealth. Lady Redwoode has adopted you as her second daughter. It is in my power to induce her to make a will leaving you half her fortune—"

He paused, half frightened by the scorn that gave distinctness to every feature of the maiden's face. The dark eyes looked at him passionately; the delicate nostrils dilated with anger; and her mobile lips curled themselves into a scornful expression that sank deeply into his scheming heart.

"Hellice!" he faltered, aghast at the false step he had made.

"Leave me!" she said, haughtily. "I am surprised that you dare address me thus. I would be alone!"

Mr. Forsythe dare not disobey the haughty mandate. He felt greatly lessened in his own eyes when, Hellice having refused to listen to him further, he was obliged to withdraw. He went out into the garden, with lowering face, muttering:—

"What a noble woman she is! I might have known better than to do as I did! What miserable folly to think of bribing that haughty, high-souled creature! But I will not rest until she consents to become my wife! I will make my way into this breach between her and Sir Richard Houghton, repair the mischief I have done, and make her my wife. I will not be frightened by one repulse. She shall yet become mine!"

His eyes glittered with indomitable resolve, and it was easy to see that no slight obstacle would turn him from the course he had marked out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Evening had fallen upon Redwoode. The dinner-hour had passed with due observation, and the family had gathered in the drawing-room, which was brilliantly lighted, as usual.

The music-room adjoining was filled with a soft, twilight glow, inexpressibly soothing to troubled hearts and wearied nerves, and here Hellice sat, evoking with light touch sweet, sad music that seemed to come from her very soul, so consonant was it with her own mood.

Lady Redwoode, from her chair in the outer apartment, listened to her in rapt silence, with one hand over her eyes, shutting out the light and brilliancy of the scene around her.

Mr. Andrew Forsythe stood at one of the drawing-room windows, thoughtful and abstracted, with strange thoughts working in his heart, yet abating nothing of his relentless resolves.

Mr. Kenneth had withdrawn on necessary business, and Cecile, the declared heiress of Redwoode, was left to her own communings.

She sat in a hollow, crimson-cushioned chair, from which she could look indolently into the radiant conservatory, whose wealth of colour, light, and perfume had a strange fascination for her.

She was in full evening dress, a robe of pale turquoise silk falling away from her figure in sweeping folds, and lying on the carpet in broken, shining heaps.

Floating ribbons, soft laces, and gleaming jewels, gave lightness and effect to her becoming costume.

Her golden hair shimmered under the light of the chandelier; her blue eyes gleamed languidly through their screen of lashes, and a satisfied look gave expression to her features.

Looking at her exterior, one would have deemed her an angel of light; but had one glimpsed of her heart been obtainable one would have recoiled from that fair being in horror.

Satisfied as she looked and really felt, there were deadly schemes working in her heart, which had been implanted there by the Hindoo ayah—schemes which, if known, would have made even Andrew Forsythe shrink from her in terror and detestation.

Her affairs seemed to be progressing smoothly enough. After the scene in the boudoir she had made a display of gentleness and forgiveness that had greatly impressed the Baroness, and had contrived to increase the ever-varying current of her ladyship's doubts and fears.

She had again cunningly made insinuations against Hellice's truthfulness and goodness, and had forced upon Lady Redwoode the positive conviction that one of these young girls was a base deception—but she could not decide which it was!

Cecile leaned back in her chair and looked with half-shut eyes into the conservatory, where softly-tinted globes transmitted a mellow, moonlike light, that sent tender rays searching into the perfumed hearts of tiny, gay-coloured chalcids, and turned the falling spray of the fountains into solid and glittering gems.

The masses of scarlet and pink and white flowers stood out in bold relief, and waves of fragrance were wafted to the indolent maiden, delighting her senses.

Once or twice Andrew Forsythe turned his head and looked at her, and once or twice Lady Redwoode, in changing her position, moved her fingers from before her eyes, and regarded by chance the pretty picture presented by Cecile; but the glances of both were but momentary, and their object was not even aware of them.

The fragrance, light, warmth and music conspired to induce thoughtfulness and dreamy reveries, and Cecile was absorbed in herself, until suddenly she was startled by the apparition of a dark figure rising from amidst the flowers of the conservatory—a figure whose stealthy movements and uplifted forefinger enjoined silence upon her.

A glance at the berry-brown face, with glittering eyes, the gay bandanna headdress, and long, swinging ear-rings, assured her that the figure was that of her faithful Hindoo nurse.

It was plain that the woman desired secrecy, and was anxious to impress a sense of caution upon her young mistress.

No Asiatic could have exceeded Cecile in subtlety at that moment. She evinced only by a quick gleam of her blue eyes, resembling the sudden flashing of a sword in the sunlight, that she beheld her attendant. Yet Renee knew that she had been seen and understood, and she dropped down behind some low, thick shrubs, satisfied with her success.

Cecile gazed furtively a moment later and saw that Renee had not attracted attention other than her own, and that no one was regarding her. She put her hand up to her face as if to conceal a yawn, and then arose and walked across the floor, her robe trailing and rustling behind her. After a turn around the apartment she entered the conservatory, and appeared intent on idly gathering together a handful of flowers. Lady Redwoode looked up and saw her plucking the blossoms, and gave no more heed to her, but Andrew Forsythe did not turn his head.

Cecile passed up and down the flower-bordered aisles once or twice, dipped her white fingers into the cool basin of the fountain, and watched the spray as it fell back again with musical murmur. Then she drew nearer to the crouching Hindoo, whose face gleamed out from a nest of feathery foliage, and whispered, impatiently:—

"Well, what is it?"

"Only this," was the low-uttered response, and the ayah held up a small, white letter. "It is for you. I was walking in the garden, when a gentleman came up softly and placed it in my hand. He said it was for the golden-haired Miss Glimtwick!"

"Who was the gentleman, Renee?" whispered the girl, eagerly, snatching at the letter, and looking at her nurse with burning eyes.

The Hindoo smiled significantly, and answered:—

"Does not your heart tell you? Why, when I saw him I seemed to feel again the burning sun of India and the warm air of our

native land. He followed us by the next vessel."

Cecile interrupted her by a whispered exclamation and passed by her, going up to one of the glowing globes, so that the light would fall upon her letter. It was addressed simply to "Miss Cecile Glinwick," in a delicate handwriting, with many flourishes.

Cecile's cheeks became covered with blushes, where they frolicked and fluttered at will, like birds making their trial flights. She tore open the missive, and read with eagerness its contents. They consisted of only a few lines, which ran as follows:

"Cecile,—I am here, and waiting. Meet me in the Aecia Walk as soon as possible.

"DARCY."

A light, incredulous smile broke over Cecile's face.

"Here!" she exclaimed. "Here and waiting! It does not seem possible. Love must have lent him wings to get here so soon. I will go to him at once!"

She moved towards the glazed garden door with swiftiness, but Renee caught her robe and whispered:—

"Wait; you will get cold. Here is your cloak."

She folded about the maiden a long, white cloak that looked like awnsdown, and threw over her head a light veil.

"I am going with you to act as sentinel, my pretty bird," she then said.

Cecile made no objections to this resolve, but caught up the shimmering train of her robe, and hurried from the conservatory, closely followed by the Hindoo.

They flitted through the flower garden and soon gained the Aecia Walk, which conducted them from the mansion into the intricacies of the park. It looked lonely now in the still moonlight, and Cecile shivered and drew around her more closely her sheltering cloak, in which she looked like a girlish spectre.

"I do not see him, Renee," she said, complainingly. "He cannot have gone?"

Before the Hindoo had time to reassure her a tall, manly figure started out from the shadow of the trees bordering the walk, and advanced rapidly towards her.

With a joyful cry Cecile sprang forward, and was clasped in his arms.

"Oh, Darcy, is it indeed you?" she exclaimed, in a glad voice. "I feared you would think the journey too long—"

"Too long!" interrupted her lover. "I would have followed you all over the earth, Cecile, dearest," and he lavished an infinitude of caresses upon her. "I landed only yesterday, and came on to Rodwoode directly. By good fortune I stumbled on Renee in the garden, and she undertook to bring about our meeting. Cecile, darling, you are more bewitching than ever. I shall need a new vocabulary with which to do justice to your charms."

Cecile replied by a look of tender love, mingled with admiration of his manly beauty, for Darcy Anchester was handsome, with the dark, olive complexion and bright, black eyes peculiar to the children of the tropics. He was unusually tall in stature, two or three inches beyond six feet, but his broad shoulders and well-developed person made his extreme height less striking than might have been expected.

His head was surrounded by a mass of close-curling hair that lay in tiny tufts of curls, adding greatly to his attractions.

There was something grand in his person, and it was scarcely to be wondered at that Cecile found his bold, handsome face and dashing manner quite irresistible.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2013. Back numbers can be obtained through any News-agent.)

A Salvationist's Remarkable Experience.

COLD CHILLS, DEBILITY, AND FAINTING FITS NEARLY ENDED HER DAYS.

MARVELLOUS BILE BEAN CURE.

"I began to have cold chills which ran through me as if cold water had been poured over my skin."

The speaker, Mrs. E. Sheldon, of 6, Bright Street, New Brighton, Morley, was telling a reporter the marvellous rescue from a serious illness by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness.

"It is four or five years ago," continued Mrs. Sheldon (now the picture of health) "that I first became ill. I had these cold chills; and got so weak and languid that I could not do my work. My appetite fell off; and even when I got something tempting to make me eat I had no relish for it. Doctors gave me medicine, which, however, did not bring me round. Eventually I got a 'recommend' for the Cookridge Hospital, and stayed there under special treatment for three weeks. At the end of that time I was a little better, but upon my return home I soon drifted back into my old state."

"Then, three years ago, I began to have fits. I was at the sink one day when I



thought there was such a terrible noise outside I could not make it out, so I went to the door. Directly I opened it I was overcome by a death-like sensation. I shouted out, and then I remember no more till I found myself lying down in bed with my friends gathered round me. The 'noise in the street' only existed in my own head; and I had fainted immediately I reached the door."

"The doctor was fetched, and said it was owing to my age, but another who attended me later said it was colic. A third described it as an epileptic fit. I was very ill in bed for several days; and suffered intense agony from flatulence. My body was swollen to a shocking extent; and when I took food it only made my condition worse. The fits continued, and as a rule I had them every few weeks. They made me a helpless invalid, and kept me to my bed for ten days at a time."

"A strange thing occurred to me at about this time: I lost my memory; my hearing was also affected, and my sight. I had to wear glasses to thread an ordinary needle, and without them I could not read a paper. I appeared to get worse in general health, losing flesh until I seemed all skin and bone. My nerves became quite shattered, and so afraid was I of being overtaken by a fit that I never dared go out without a bottle of sal volatile, or some stimulant handy for emergency."

"I am a member of the Salvation Army, and when I went to the meeting I always felt more at ease when I had someone for company who knew where to find the stimulant should I go off in a fit."

"Early this year I had a slight attack of English cholera; and I think that the consequent weakness brought on a very bad fit."

"I was weeks bad after that, and could scarcely remember or see anything. I was in

this condition when I heard of a man at Rothwell—where we used to live—who had benefited by taking Chas. Forde's Bile Beans. I was anxious to try them; and I determined to go in for a course. My condition was too serious for me to observe any decided change at first; but I felt sure they would do me good if I persevered."

"I followed carefully all the directions, and at the end of ten days I was able to crawl down stairs. I persevered with the Beans, and my strength seemed to come back to me. My appetite also returned, and I was soon able to take many things I dared not touch before. I still went on with the medicine until cured. I have now no longer the fear of the fits, and I have benefited in every possible way. I have increased in weight, have regained my sight, my memory, and my hearing. The strange noises in my head, the wind, dizziness, the weakness, and all the other distressing symptoms of my case have, after these long years, completely given place to health, strength, and renewed vitality. For this I have Chas. Forde's Bile Beans alone to thank, and I never tire of recommending them to my friends."

Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness may be obtained from any chemist or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co.'s Head English Depot, 119 and 120, London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. (2s. 9d. box contains three times 1s. 1½d. size.) Bile Beans are sold only in sealed boxes, never loose.

Gems

HUMAN strength can be gained through human energy. It is not always a gift which Nature showers upon some and denies to others, but is often a gradual development in the individual, progressing in accordance with the active efforts and earnest struggles which he puts forth.

SELF-RESPECT is a clean and gracious well-fitting garment, wherein we can move at ease among our fellows, passing quietly beyond the tawdry little platform where self-esteem is forever making its bow and acting its lines to an indifferent and unattentive audience.

BEWARE of making your moral staple consist of the negative virtues. It is good to abstain from all that is sinful or harmful or hurtful. But making a business of it leads to emaciation of character, unless one feeds largely also on the more nutritious diet of active, sympathetic benevolence.

WORK touches the key of endless activity, opens the infinite, and stands awe-struck before the immensity of what there is to do.

CONTINUAL sailing on a smooth sea never yet made a skilful mariner; it is a storm that awakens dexterity and power.

AWAITED.

Although I dare to say
My heart untarnished is from day to day,
'Tis not, O Love, that any strength of mine
From sin has kept me free.

But as I now look back
Across the years that span the weary track,
All the dear deeds I ever strove to do
Were done because of you.

All the white thoughts I had
Were but pure flowers to one day make you
glad;

Every improving act, each little grace,
Humbly, dear one, I trace

Back to my hope of you,
Long, long before your wondrous face I
knew;

Ah, your white coming, silent and unseen,
Made me and kept me clean!

C. H. T.

Gleanings

ANY fool can find fault; most fools do.

We can always see why others should set a good example.

It is easier to buy the good opinion of the world than to merit it.

Appreciation is not always shown in a manner in which it is appreciated.

Empty barrels make the most noise; after them come those who have emptied them.

Every man has in him the capacity for running some business—usually some other man's business.

Every man who shows that he thinks as highly of himself as we do of ourselves we set down as conceited.

Of the nine Pyramids of Gizeh, the first is the oldest, the greatest, and by far the best built. This, always known as the *Great Pyramid*, was built by Khufu, the Cheops of the Greeks, about 3950 B.C. It covers as much space as Lincoln's Inn Fields, and when perfect was over 480 feet in height.

THE names given to plants and vegetables are sometimes a little confusing, as a couple of cyclists touring in a remote part of Scotland found. They were very hungry, and accosted an old gentleman who was pottering about in his potato patch. He said he would do what he could for them, but at any rate he could promise them some good potatoes, as he had every known variety in his garden. After eating, they congratulated their host on the excellence of their dinner, especially the potatoes. "Well," said he, "you have not done badly; you've eaten two schoolmasters, one blacksmith, four kidneys, and a white elephant!"

IS THE CZAR SUPERSTITIOUS?—The Czar wears a ring in which he believes is embedded a piece of the true Cross. It was originally one of the treasures of the Vatican, and was presented to an ancestor of the Czar for diplomatic reasons. Some years ago the Czar was travelling from St. Petersburg to Moscow. He suddenly discovered that he had forgotten the ring. The train was stopped immediately and a special messenger sent flying back on an express engine for it, nor would the Czar allow the train to move until, several hours afterwards, the messenger returned with the ring.

KING EDWARD is the first British monarch whose accession has made the issue of a freshly-designed postage stamp necessary. The year of Queen Victoria's accession saw the publication of Rowland Hill's revolutionary pamphlet on postal reform. Before this, the use of the postage stamp was utterly unknown in any of the great countries of Europe. So far back as 1553 its adoption had been urged in Paris. The proposal, however, came to nothing; and the earliest State of which we hear as making use of stamped covers for postal purposes is the kingdom of Sardinia, in the years 1819-1821.

THE latest association among women is the Don't-Get-Tired Club. It is of American origin, but there would seem to be room enough in England for something of the kind. The members pledge themselves on their word of honour as gentlemen not to shop the whole of the day "without suitable and proper refreshment." Stringent rules are drawn up of what is and what is not allowed under this heading. Then each member swears to do her shopping systematically, to make out a list of everything she wants to buy, and never to toil from shop to shop to see if she can't "get it cheaper." A limit is placed on the amount of shopping that may be done in one day—three hours for town women and five for suburbanites. The carrying of parcels is absolutely forbidden, and shopping in a short skirt made obligatory. Lastly, the members undertake to have all their shopping done by December 23 of each year.

SOME Japanese young girls, when they desire to look extremely captivating give their lips.

ON an average, one in four cases of typhoid in the British troops in South Africa has proved fatal.

TOWNS of England and Wales are in debt 263 millions sterling, while those of Scotland add another 37 millions to this amount.

THE British 5 in. howitzer is the heaviest gun used behind a team of horses. It weighs 48 cwt. The ordinary field-gun weighs 38 cwt.

THE national flower of Greece is said to be the violet; the chrysanthemum belongs to Japan, the narcissus to China, the orchid to Mexico, the cornflower to Germany, the pomegranate to Spain, the orange and tulip to Holland.

A CHOICE OF STOMACHS.—Veterinary specialists are much perplexed about the case of a camel which has developed gastritis. Camels, however, are the proud possessors of no fewer than seven stomachs apiece, and the difficulty is to know which to treat.

LONDON'S CHARITY.—According to the "Classified Directory to the Metropolitan Charities for 1902," the approximate income for the year 1900-1 of the various beneficent agencies having their headquarters in London amounts to nearly six and a half millions sterling. Of these organisations there are 965.

HANDS.—How seldom one notices hands that show the signs of care and attention, which is a mark of daintiness. To see the tips of the fingers spotty and black, and round the nails broken and dirty, will deny the claims to daintiness of any woman. The hands should be rubbed with some lotion every night and the nails manicured frequently to keep their dainty shell-pink appearance. There is great power in a woman's pretty hand; but the moment it loses its beauty she loses her hold.

To be the inmate of a workhouse for more than thirty years is not a career to be proud of; yet it may be said of the late James Hill, who recently died in the Hampstead Workhouse at the age of seventy-two, that a prolonged pauper existence had not sapped his spirit or his ingenuity. Some seven years ago the guardians erected a block of buildings containing some very comfortable apartments for the accommodation of married couples over sixty years of age. This was not with a view to the encouragement of matrimony among the inmates, but to carry out the provisions of the Act, which simply state that couples of this age shall not be separated. James, who was then sixty-six, at once married a widow of sixty-four, who was also an old resident of the workhouse, and then put in a formal claim to be admitted to the married couples' quarters, and to share the privileges accorded to them. After a good deal of discussion he gained his point.

NEWS comes from Chicago that the domestic servants of that business-like city have formed a union. They demand eight-hour shifts, "company" in the kitchen of an evening, days off each week, and definitely prescribed work. This is good news, and should make Americans humble. They have solved many problems, but the problem of household administration on an orderly basis is still beyond them. They fly from it to seek refuge in boarding-houses and hotels. Americans won't go into service, neither will the German immigrants; even the Irish are beginning to mount higher, and the Italians have a genius for incapacity in such employments. The Swedes are adequate, but there is not enough of them to go round. The Japs make excellent butlers, but here again the supply is deficient. The Chinese, who do most of the household work in California and the south-western States, are under the ban of the Labour unions. Altogether the chances of domestic comfort grow smaller each year in the States.

PINS were introduced into England from France by Catherine Howard, fifth wife of Henry VIII. Needles have been known in China, India, and Egypt from remote times.

THE common and familiar thread spun by the spider is so fine that 25,000 miles of it, enough to go round the world, would weigh only 8oz.

UMBRELLAS are very ancient, having been used in Persia and China, as indications of great honour. They were carried over monarchs' heads, hanging by a ring to a pole. They were first used in England about 1780, but had been adopted on the Continent before.

FORKS came into use in England about 1600. A traveller in Queen Elizabeth's reign relates that at Venice he was served with a fork as well as with a knife and spoon at meals; "for there they deem it ill manners that one should touch his meat with his fingers."

CARS first appeared in London in 1833. In that year there were twelve in the metropolis. The number now exceeds 12,000. The hansom cab was invented by Mr. Hansom, an architect, in 1833.

A TRAIN-LOAD OF EGGS.—A train composed of twelve refrigerator cars containing about 2,000,000 eggs is one of the latest wonders of America. The eggs had been gathered by one firm in the vicinity of Newton, Kansas, and shipped to San Francisco, California, U.S.A. The cars, it need hardly be said, were of special construction, and the value of the shipment aggregated about £5,000, including freight charges, which amounted to over £1,000.

£150,000,000 IN DRINK.—At a recent Temperance meeting the Dean of Hereford, in referring to the drink bill of 160 millions, said "it had been clearly proved that the working-man consumed one-fifth of his earnings in drink in the course of the year. Was it not time that something should be done to reduce this amount of drinking, with all its terrible results? A member of Parliament did good work by muzzling dogs because of twelve deaths from rabies, but in that same year there were 1,360 deaths from delirium tremens, and yet no one heard anything about muzzling those who supplied the poison."

HOW TO KILL CRIME.—Speaking seriously, says Sir Robert Anderson, late of the Criminal Investigation Department, and deliberately, if not 70,000 but seventy known criminals were put out of the way, the whole organisation of crime against property in England would be dislocated, and we should, not ten years hence, but immediately, enjoy an amount of immunity from crimes of this kind that it might to-day seem Utopian to expect. My opinion is based on definite facts and a knowledge of the personnel of the criminal fraternity. And I say with confidence that new methods of dealing with these men—methods such as would command the approval of five-sixths of the community—would avail to put an end to organised crimes against property in England.

MAGGOTS IN CHEESE.—The blue mould which appears in certain kinds of cheese is, as we all know, much appreciated by epicures; but maggots come under a different category, and are only calculated to cause feelings of disgust. The French Minister of Agriculture has recently issued a leaflet which gives directions for preventing this pest. The maggots are the larvæ or grubs of a small two-winged fly, which commences its egg-laying operations in the cheese some time in April, and is responsible for five or six generations of its species by the following October. If this fly can be kept out of the houses where the cheeses are stored it is obvious that no maggots will appear. The first course recommended is a most thorough cleaning, including a scraping out of all corners and crevices, a whitewashing of walls, and a scrubbing of shelves. Windows, doors, and ventilators must be covered with wire gauze having no fewer than 25 apertures to the inch. It is urged that these safeguards are far more effective than the employment of any kind of insecticide.

Facetiæ

"THAT man has the greatest voice of anybody on the floor," said a visitor in the House gallery, as a member sat down after the speech. "Just like a bass drum," replied his companion visitor. "Yes, strong and sonorous." "Yes, and nothing inside of it."

CHIPPER: "I say, haven't you grown tall since you got that coat? Seems to me it's pretty short, isn't it?" Snipper: "No; I had it so on purpose." "What for?" "So that when anyone made an insulting remark about its looks I could kick him without bursting off the bottom button."

BLACKSMITH (to young man): "You think you possess the necessary qualifications for a blacksmith?" Young Man: "Yes, sir; I was a member of the football team at college." Blacksmith (dubiously): "You may be strong enough, young man, but this business demands brains as well as strength."

"I WANT a Bible," said a tall, gaunt woman, stepping into a bookshop. "Do you wish the revised edition?" inquired the clerk, civilly. "I ain't pertakeler. I jes' want one in the house so I'll have a safe place to keep my specs in. A family Bible that won't never be meddled with is the kind I want." She got it.

AT THE HOSPITAL.—Physician: "I congratulate you sincerely, my dear sir." Patient (joyfully): "Then I will recover!" Physician: "No; not exactly; but after consultation we have come to the conclusion that your case is an entirely new one, and we have decided to give your name to the malady, provided that our diagnosis is confirmed by the autopsy." (Patient immediately expires from fright.)

MME. PRIMA DONNA: "I will have to ask you to change that bill, sir." Hotel-keeper: "Beg pardon; I made it out myself, and am sure it is correct." "Instead of owing you fifty pounds, you owe me two thousand pounds." "Eh! Wha—wha—how do you make that out?" "While in my room dressing this morning I forgot myself and sang an aria all the way through."

A HIGHLAND CHIEF, being on his deathbed, was exhorted to forgive his enemies. He called his eldest son to his bedside and thus spoke his last: "Donald, you see what a pass I have come to, and I am told that I must forgive my enemies, and especially the McTavish; and, for my soul's sake, I do forgive him accordingly. But, Donald, my dear son, if ever ye forgive the Tavish, or any o' his infernal name, may ma curse rest on ye for ever and ever. Amen!"

USUALLY SO.—Merritt: "A man is as old as he feels." Cora: "How about a woman?" Merritt: "She is generally as old as other people feel she is."

POINTED DIRECTIONS.—Merritt: "A man shouldn't bother a woman by talking business." Cora: "That's right, dear. If you mean business, go talk to papa."

DANGEROUS CURIOSITY.—Laura: "Yes, you see she told him her father had lost all his wealth, just to test his love for her." Aida: "And then?" Laura: "Well, she will know better next time."

HIS DELICATE PROPOSAL.—Gladys: "What a dear little clock! Who gave you that?" Marjorie: "George's arse." Gladys: "I it going?" Marjorie: "Oh, no. George wishes me to understand that I may set my own time."

IMPOSSIBLE INCONSISTENCY.—Miss Highe-Way: "Poor Fido cried so when I drove away in the victoria without him!" Mr. Quiz: "Why didn't you take him with you?" Miss Highe-Way: "Because I didn't go in the dog-cart, of course."

A GOOD story is told of an old lady from the country who took a seat in the lift of one of our leading stores the other day, and placidly kept her seat while the lift plied from ground floor to top storey indefinitely. At length the lift man inquired if she intended to get out anywhere in particular. "Yes," replied the dear old soul, "you may let me out at Temple Place."

YOUNG Lady at Hotel (to caller): "Ah, Mr. De Doode. You have left our hotel, I believe?" Mr. De Doode: "Ya-as, don't you know." "So sorry. Whatever could have possessed you?" "Ah, Miss Frances, it was the beauty nawkpkins, don't you know. The waiters brought them in dwamp, don't you know, and they gave me a terrific cold in the head. A man can't stand everything, Miss Frances."

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Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

JENNIE.—Warm an ordinary iron, cover it with a wet cloth, and hold it under the velvet. This will raise the pile and make the velvet look like new.

COOK.—In trussing pheasants it is optional whether the head is left on or not. If left it should be brought round under the wing and fixed on the point of the skewer. The upper part of the feet should remain, the claws being cut off.

ZENO.—No; really good lace must not be ironed while wet. Pin it on a board covered with three thicknesses of flannel; pull out all the points carefully. Leave it till dry, take out all the pins, and press with a moderately-warm iron.

A. E. V.—To freshen stale cake, put it into a box with a closely-fitting lid; place this before the fire, but not so near as to scorch the wood of the box, and turn it round occasionally. If the cake is large, cut it into thin slices before heating it. It will be ready for use in about an hour.

SYMPATHETIC.—When in slight mourning the following makes a suitable evening toilette: A long and very full skirt of plain black net as the underskirt, over it a peplum of figured net spotted all over with jet stars and with rows of black satin ribbon following the outline of the peplum. A full blouse body, cut low in the neck, with a jetted and ribboned berthe arranged round the upper part of the bodice and to fall over short balloon-shaped sleeves. Above the berthe, from both the armpits, a piece of white satin, wide and full, is arranged, which is tied in a simple knot without bows or ends in the centre of the bodice. A broad white satin sash with long ends is the only other trimming.

PUNCH.—Massage is one of the best remedies for wrinkles. You can apply it yourself, but the process, to be effective, requires patience and perseverance. Your other trouble is a different matter. I am afraid you will not put on flesh to any extent whilst you are growing so fast. Nearly six feet high, and only just past your "teens," is a fair height! You should take plenty of flesh-forming foods, such as milk, cream, cocoa, eggs, butter, and farinaceous foods. Potatoes and vegetables of all kinds I would advise you to eat, and, above all, don't worry. Just take things quietly for a time and make up your mind to be contented and happy, for I assure you that this is an essential part of the "cure."

MULBERRY.—The history of the mulberry gardens which occupied the site of Buckingham Palace is as follows:—The ground had been planted up with mulberry trees by order of James I., one of whose whims was the encouragement of the growth of silk in England as a source of revenue. With this object in view, he imported many shiploads of young mulberry trees, most of which were planted round the metropolis. Indeed, he gave by patent to Walter, Lord Aston, the superintendence of "the mulberry gardens, near St. James," but all Lord Aston's efforts were unable to secure success; the speculation proved a failure, and the gardens were afterwards devoted to a public recreation ground. John Evelyn described these gardens as "the best places about the throne for persons of the best quality to be exceedingly cheated at," and Samuel Pepys said it was "a silly place with a wilderness somewhat pretty."

TIRED TIM.—An effectual cure for creaking boots is to put them in linseed oil, only as far as the top of the soles, and leave them all night; they may require twice so doing, but it is quite a cure.

HOLLY.—I would suggest your wearing mittens during the day as your hands are so much exposed to the weather. I know many who wear them, and they tell me that the mittens keep their hands comparatively free from chilblains and redness, both of which are frequently caused by imperfect circulation, owing to want of exercise, as in your case.

LEAH.—The willow-pattern plate is thus explained: A Chinese mandarin had an only daughter, named Li-chi; she fell in love with Chang, her father's secretary, who lived in the island cottage which is shown at the top of the plate. The mandarin, her father, forbade the match, so the lovers eloped, and they lay concealed for a time in the gardener's cottage; from there they made their escape in the secretary's island home. The angry father pursued them with a whip in his hand, and he would have beaten them to death, but the gods changed the lovers into turtle-doves. It is called the willow-pattern because at the time of the elopement the willow began to shed its leaves.

VERONICA.—You do not say what you wish to dye—whether cloth or silk, straw, feathers, or gloves. Black dyeing is always difficult, and you will find that you cannot dye any of the above satisfactorily at home. The following is, however, a fast and reliable dye for woollen goods, and may answer your purpose:—Put into half a gallon of water a piece of bichromate of potash, the size of a horse-bean. Boil the articles in this for seven or eight minutes; take them out and wring them well. Then into another half-gallon of water put one tablespoonful and a half of ground logwood; boil the articles in this the same length of time as before. Then wash them in cold water.

IVANHOE.—For your nail trouble, a little lanoline rubbed on to the nails at night, after washing the hands, will render them less brittle. You have made a great mistake in cutting the skin at the base of the nail; this should be pushed gently down with a nail trimmer, never cut. Weak nails are often speckled with white opaque dots and bars, but these marks frequently disappear as one gets older, and as the tone of the general health improves. In order that the nails should be nice and pleasant to look upon they must be regularly and carefully cut with nail-scissors—never with a pen-knife—and the shape of the fingers must regulate that of the nails, which should be cut so as to correspond with the curve of the finger tips.

T. W.—The wonderful dinner to which you refer, some of the edibles of which had been preserved from ancient times, really took place in Brussels about six years ago. It was declared, and with evident authority, that "the bread was made from wheat grown before the children of Israel passed over the Red Sea, the apples were eighteen hundred years old, the butter several centuries old, and the wine nearly one thousand years in age." The apples were from an earthen jar found in the excavated ruins of Pompeii, which city, as we all know, was buried under molten lava at the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius. The wheat was taken from a chamber of one of the pyramids of Egypt. The butter was found on a stone shelf in an old well in Scotland, where for centuries it had lain in an earthen crock in icy water, and the wine was recovered from an old vault in the city of Corinth. There were six guests at this famous dinner, and each one had a very small portion of each of the ancient viands (having plenty of every-day food afterwards); but they testified to the excellence of the bread, butter, and wine, while the apples were as sweet and finely-flavoured as if plucked only a few weeks before.

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